

CREEPY CAMPFIRE TALES

**MISADVENTURES
OF A
WIDE-EYED BOY SCOUT**

PHIL DICKINSON

Lulu Publishing
Morrisville, North Carolina

This book is a work of both fiction and non-fiction. Some names, characters, places, and incidents are real and based on true events while others are purely a product of the author's imagination and are used fictitiously. In the latter case, any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 2008 by Phil Dickinson

Front and back cover designs copyright © 2008 by Lulu Publishing

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted to any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author.

Printed by: Lulu Publishing, North Carolina

Phil Dickinson
10595 Rogers Road
Alanson, MI 49706

Email: phil@racc2000.com

Creepy Campfire Tales is not an official
publication of the Boy Scouts of America.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1st Printing 2008

PREFACE

In the 1970's, I was a Boy Scout in a small town in northern Maine. I was fortunate to have supportive parents, an imaginative group of Scout friends, and a tolerant Scoutmaster during those years. It was customary on camping trips to tell stories around the campfire at night before bedtime, and it was from these experiences these tales are derived.

Some of the stories you will read actually happened to me. Other ones have been around for many years and have been told and retold. With each recitation the storyteller would elaborate on the events, embellishing the details, and adding his own special "touch" to the plot to make it more gruesome or suspenseful.

So, for those of you lucky enough to have heard these stories before, I hope you enjoy them again. For those of you hearing them for the first time, I hope that they give you the same chills and thrills as they did me the first time I heard them – or experienced them – as you will soon find out. But most of all, I hope you share them around the campfire in the tradition of camping and Scouting.

Phil Dickinson, July 2008

Also by Phil Dickinson

Crosswords: A Collection For Stephen King Fans – 1988

Lifetime Stories – 1996

The Legend of Three-Fingered Willie – 2008

*This book is dedicated to my former Scoutmaster,
Richard Turner
my profound mentor, my good friend,
and my favorite storyteller.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Inside Cover.....	i
Copyright.....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Author Book Page.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
Quote.....	ix

<u>STORY</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Haunted Graveyard.....	1
Three-Fingered Willie.....	19
The Millpond Monster.....	27
Outhouse John.....	41
Bloody Half Acre.....	45
Devil's Elbow.....	53
Son of Pamola, God/Beast.....	71
Alien Abduction in Allagash.....	81
The Bear Cave.....	93
The Squapan Lake Creature.....	107
The Screecher.....	135
Attack of the Giant Army Worms.....	147
Susan B. Everling.....	169
Monster Woods.....	177
Afterward.....	199

Fiction is the truth inside the lie.

- - Stephen King

HAUNTED GRAVEYARD

In September 1973, I was 11 years old and the youngest Boy Scout in Mapleton Troop 170. The older boys in that Troop were well seasoned with lots of experience and good hearty adult leadership. They were all quite prepared for the Fall Camporee that month being held in Hodgedon, Maine. However, was I prepared? I thought I was, but I most certainly was not prepared for the haunted graveyard on my first night out. Let me tell you what happened...

I tapped my pencil on the desk repeatedly during seventh hour waiting for the bell to ring. I fidgeted in my seat, constantly watching the clock as it ticked away the seconds, and imagined myself camping somewhere in the wilderness with a group of boys my age and older.

All I could think about was racing home to get my camping gear and hopping on the bus. It was a Friday afternoon in mid September 1973. I couldn't contain my excitement about my first Boy Scout Camporee. I had never been camping before. We had all been planning this trip for several months, practicing our skills, planning our menus, and making a list of supplies we would need.

When the final school bell rang for the day, I was on my way home to grab the bags that were already packed and headed out to Scoutmaster Dan's house to make the 4:00 p.m. deadline. We loaded all our gear in a huge pile in the back of an old rickety bus with some seats removed for just this purpose. By 4:30 p.m. we were on our way to Hodgedon.

We arrived at our destination just after 5:30 p.m. all eager to set up camp before it got dark. The late summer sun on the easternmost edge of our time zone was beginning to dip fast in the western sky. We knew we did not have much time to set up our campsite and eat dinner before nightfall.

Our bus was parked at the entrance to a large meadow somewhere in the middle of nowhere many miles from the nearest town. I could see from the activity through the small bus window that this was going to be a well attended event. There were Scouts everywhere! White and green tents dotted

the countryside for as far as the eye could see. Scouts were dressed in their standard field uniforms – tan shirts, green pants, old style berets, and hiking boots – and were carrying their gear on their backs or in their hands as they hiked to their campsites to make their cozy little home away from home for the weekend.

“Troop 170 Boy Scouts get off the bus,” commanded Scoutmaster Dan in a booming military voice as he stood just outside the open door of the faded yellow school bus.

All twenty boys, ranging in ages from 11 to 18, hurried down the short flight of steps and were soon followed by three adult leaders who attended almost every scheduled campout (as I learned from the older boys) like clockwork. As I got out of the bus, I felt a surge of excitement and some nervousness at my upcoming adventure. I was the youngest boy in the Troop. I was eager to make new friends and learn how to survive a weekend outdoors. But I had never spent the night in a tent before. I convinced myself that if all of my friends were doing it, then so could I.

We made our way to the back door of the bus to collect our gear and supplies. We had everything we needed for a successful weekend camping, including our personal supplies, sleeping bags, tents, camping tools, equipment, camp stoves, food, and water.

I was eager to help the older boys as we attacked the pile. We would be carrying all of our stuff several hundred yards to our designated campsite. No vehicles were allowed to get closer due to safety restrictions. So, one by one, we lined up in formation for an armful of gear and marched back and forth to our site.

When the bus was finally unloaded, I watched as the older boys set up camp. I tried to help as much as I could, but I got confused with the process. It was obvious they had done this many times before because they didn’t miss a beat. They set up canopies and picnic tables, opened up the mess kit for

cooking, lashed together campsite furniture using small poles and hemp rope, and raised the flags.

I was amazed at how easy it all appeared. The older boys had it down to a science with no one arguing or fighting about completing the various tasks. The adult leaders stayed “behind the scenes” and let these boys run the show. I quickly learned to take orders from the veteran Scouts who were in a position of higher rank and seniority over me.

“Here is where our campsite entrance will be,” said Bradley, the Senior Patrol Leader. “Our campfire will be right here in the middle of our site. The three patrols – Eagle, Bobcat, and Wolf – will set up their tents along the outer edge of this site next to those trees over there (pointing). But right now we need to get our fire going for dinner.”

So, I was recruited with some other boys to gather deadfall and brush from the nearby woods. While we were doing this other boys were preparing to dig a hole in the ground for a fire pit. In no time at all, we got a big pile of wood stacked up and the campfire was blazing away.

Now that we had a fire for cooking, it was time to set up our tents. The older boys showed me how to do this properly. I didn’t know how to tie the right knots, or how to stake it down so I had to watch and learn. The dark green tents we had were made of heavy duty canvas material and looked like those used in the military. They were about five feet tall by five feet wide with one zipper right down the middle. I laid my sleeping bag and backpack on one side of the tent while my friend, Scott, did the same on the other half.

This was going to be so cool!

I made my way around our campsite playing games and watching some of the older boys as they prepared our Friday night meal of beef stew and sandwiches. I was unfamiliar with the routine so I just watched, waiting eagerly to help if anyone asked.

As they were cooking, Bradley looked up and said, “Philip, could you help us out by going next door and asking if we could borrow a left-handed egg beater. We can’t finish the soup without it.”

Oh, boy, I can help the cooks! I thought.

My eyes lit up. “Sure! I’ll be right back.”

So I sped away on my mission to get the left-handed egg beater for my leader. I went straight to the neighbors, Troop 171 from Presque Isle as identified on their flag at their camp entrance.

“Permission to enter your campsite,” I asked. I had learned the hard way when I got yelled at by someone when I passed through a campsite earlier in the day without asking permission.

“Permission granted,” someone said back.

I approached one of the older boys standing next to a picnic table pumping up a Coleman stove. It appeared that he and the others were busy preparing their own supper for the Troop.

“Ah...hey, do you guys have a left-handed egg beater I could borrow?” I asked timidly. “I...I’m from Troop 170 Mapleton – over there (pointing my finger across the way in the direction of my group). We could really use one.”

The decorated Scout working on the stove looked up immediately, smiled at me, and said, “Sorry there, young Scout, but we don’t have one of those things. Maybe they have one at the next campsite over yonder at Washburn.”

He seemed like a nice friendly Scout who was eager to help. I sheepishly responded with a “thanks” and walked out of the campsite. I got a bead on the Washburn Troop and ran the fifty or so yards. I knew I couldn’t waste any time because my Troop would be waiting for me to get back so they could finish cooking the meal. I surely didn’t want anyone to get mad at me for holding them up. I’ll bet everyone was real hungry, and if I let them down, they would never forgive me.

Their disappointment would always be remembered and retold at many future campouts.

As I approached the new campsite I glanced at their Troop flag. It identified them as Troop 177 from Washburn. I requested and received permission to enter.

“Excuse me,” I said slightly out of breath from having sprinted the short distance. “Do you guys have a left-handed egg beater I could use?”

Several of the boys were peering at something in a large black pot hanging by a chain over the campfire. One boy was holding a long wooden spoon. He immediately looked up, smiled handsomely in my direction and replied, “Sorry, Scout, but we sure don’t have one of those left-handed egg beater thingies that your Troop needs. But I’ll bet you can find one right over there at the next campsite. You just go over their and check, okay?”

I was disappointed again but hopeful that the next Troop would have this cooking instrument for me to take back to my campsite. So I politely said “thanks” and hurried off to the next group which happened to be Troop 185 from Caribou and asked permission to enter. It was granted.

“Does anyone here have a left-handed egg beater?” I blurted out impatiently. “I really need it if you have one I can use.” I was starting to really worry. What if I couldn’t find one? Or what if I had to go to every single Troop – as many as 20 or more – before I could find one? If I failed in this simple little task, I would never live it down.

Everyone looked up and started giggling. Then an older boy about 16 years old said, “We had one but we let the Houlton Troop use it. They are about 100 yards in that direction (pointing somewhere off to the west). See, right over there.”

I was suddenly excited. I had finally found one! All I had to do was go next door.

“Great! Gee, thanks. I’ll go right over and get it. I’ll make sure you get it back when we’re done with it.”

I hurried over as fast as I could to the next campsite, Troop 156 from Houlton, and entered the campsite without asking permission.

“I...beg...your pardon,” I said out of breath, “But...I...need that left-handed egg beater you have for my Troop. Can I borrow it please?”

The Scoutmaster from Houlton said, “Sorry, son, but we forgot to bring our left-handed egg beater contraption thingy with us on this here trip. I’m sorry. But maybe they have one next door at the Ashland Troop.”

I was stunned. How could that be? The Caribou Troop had given them one to use. Or at least that’s what they *said* they did. They must have it here somewhere. I started to panic. My troop needed that cooking utensil *right away*. If I didn’t get it back to them as soon as possible they would surely think that I was an idiot – and henceforth I would be forever part of the “Moron” Patrol for not completing such a simple task. It would be a total embarrassment that I would never live down in all my years to come. Everyone would talk about it in the future and have a good laugh at my expense.

Then I was suspicious.

“But the Troop from Caribou right over there (pointing) said that they had let you guys use *their* left-handed egg beater a few minutes ago. So you must have it here somewhere, don’t you?”

I was starting to get impatient and a little bit confused. Maybe the Scoutmaster wasn’t aware that someone in his unit had borrowed it.

One of the boys said, “No we don’t have it. Those Scouts from Caribou must be pulling your leg (some of the other boys in the Houlton Troop began to laugh). You’re just going to have to go to another campsite to find what you need.”

This can't be happening. I had to take desperate measures. I became argumentative.

"Okay, but could you just ask around – you know, see if someone else here has it and forgot to return it – before I go elsewhere? I mean, I'm sure they let you borrow it. You must have it here somewhere."

"Son, come over here," said the Scoutmaster from Houlton.

I didn't know what this was all about but I approached him as he requested. I noticed he was an elderly man, maybe 65 years old or more, with gray hair, and dark deeply wrinkled skin, no doubt from sun exposure during many outdoor adventures. He sat in his short wooden folding chair smoking his long slender black pipe. A whiff of smoke puffed up from the barrel as he exhaled. He had the appearance of a wise old grandpa, full of wisdom and wit from his many years on this earth; the kind of person that would gladly pull you aside to tell you a story or two about the "good ole days" – or perhaps try to steal a joke on you and later have a good laugh about it. A faint smile touched the corners of his lips, hardly noticeable except for the little sparkle in his eyes that helped give it away. Lying flat in his lap like a pet snake was his gnarly old walking stick.

I came forward and stopped as the other boys in the campsite watched and giggled.

He looked at me, tipped his head with a quick little jerk sideways and said, "No, come a little closer."

I hesitated but complied. I was curious about the nature of his business with me. I stopped an arm's length away.

"No, a little closer," he encouraged.

I moved a little bit closer.

"Bend down. I need to *whisper* something to you."

I got a little closer until my ear was only a soft breath away.

He tipped his wide brimmed hat back a little, leaned forward, and whispered, “Son, there is no such thing as a left-handed egg beater. Egg beaters can be used with either hand.”

I immediately understood that I was duped. I had to catch my breath. My face got flushed with blood. I didn’t know what to say. Even if I did, I couldn’t talk because my vocal cords were paralyzed. I could almost hear the other Scouts in my Troop over yonder laughing at me.

I found my strength, inhaled deeply, turned, and ran back to my campsite without saying a word. As I suspected, when I arrived, all the boys in my Troop were laughing. Even my Scoutmaster was chuckling ever so slightly under his breath.

“Very funny!” I said, trying to save face and not show my extreme embarrassment. “I knew all along anyway. You guys didn’t fool me *one bit!*” However, I didn’t sound very convincing.

“Oh, yeah,” said Bradley, “You could have fooled me. Ha Ha!”

“Okay, boys, back to cooking our meal,” said Scoutmaster Dan. “I have a meeting later and I don’t want to be late.”

I was quiet for awhile trying to recover from the cruel joke that they had played on me. But it wasn’t five minutes later that one of the cooks asked another new Scout, Scott, for help in finding a “skyhook.” It seemed that they had *misplaced* it from the last camping trip. Scott left and made his way from campsite to campsite. My recent embarrassment quickly slipped away as I joined in with the others to laugh at Scott when he returned without the requested item.

So, after all the practical jokes were over, we finished our meal and began putting things away. My name was on the roster for cleanup duty so I helped wash the dishes. After dinner, darkness set in and everyone gathered around the campfire, sitting on camp chairs, stumps, or just cross-legged on the ground.

I was feeling good. My belly was full of food and I had a nice warm fire in front of me. I occasionally put more wood on the flames and poked it with a stick so it would look like I knew what I was doing. I sat quietly watching the fire, fascinated by the bright colors and the generous heat it gave to my slightly chilled body.

I quickly learned that the fire in Scouting was the centerpiece of all activity in the campsite. During the day it was used for cooking meals, but at night, it took on a whole new meaning. This was the spot where Scouts would make announcements, sing songs, and tell stories – stories that were well beyond my imagination at that tender age.

It all began about 8 p.m. when the Scoutmaster, adult leaders, and the Senior Patrol Leader left to attend a mandatory meeting regarding the weekend activities leaving the rest of us in the capable hands of Brent, the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader. It was obvious that Brent had been in this role plenty of times before. When the Scoutmaster asked him to be in charge, he responded with enthusiasm.

“Yes sir,” Brent said. “No problem, sir. I would be *most* happy to oblige you, sir. Everything will be under control.”

I didn’t know Brent very well. All I knew about him from listening to the others was that he was 16 years old and a real “tough guy.” No one wanted to pick a fight with him because he was known to lay a guy on the ground in no time flat. He was both feared and respected by the others in the Troop.

As the leaders walked away, Brent continued to talk to them.

“Have fun at your meeting. We’ll be right here telling some spooky stories around the campfire until you get back.”

Spooky stories? I wondered. *What was that all about?*

I would soon find out.

We all sat patiently waiting for Brent to begin. He stood up in front of us, the fire at his back, and the dark trees silhouetting the nighttime sky like silent black skeletons, tall

and ominous, the perfect backdrop to a scary play. I was captivated by his words. He described the story of a young boy named Three-fingered Willie, who had wandered into Scout camp many years ago and had gotten two of his fingers chopped off when a scared young Scout threw a hatchet at him. Willie immediately killed the boy in anger. After that, Willie snuck off into the woods and vowed his revenge. Each year he killed a Scout and put his dead body in the camp latrine. He always left his three-fingered mark on the ground to show that he had been there...and that someone was dead.

“So, beware,” warned Brent, “if you are ever camping and you see three lines on the ground, Willie is lurking nearby. You can not mistake the three-fingered mark that he leaves behind. Because...because...”

“...it looks just like that one right over there!” Brent shouted and pointed to the ground. There in the soft soil were three deep gouges near his feet. One of the boys let out a fake scream and then laughed as a few of the other boys chuckled.

“You can’t fool us, Brent,” said one of the younger boys.

“Yeah, you must have made those marks on the ground yourself,” said a second boy.

When Brent finished his story, more Scouts took turns, each one trying hard to outdo the other. I would soon learn the importance of the three “S’s” technique for a successful campfire tale: seriousness, suspense, and scariness. It was obvious these Scouts had many years of practice, crafting each tale with perfect precision. We sat around the campfire listening, wide-eyed, and wondering.

The stories went on and on while the leaders were away. My Patrol Leader, Joey, told the last story of the night. It was about a man with a hook instead of a hand. He explained how this man had escaped from the insane asylum to murder people, coming out of nowhere and cut his victims up with his sharp hook. He would attack people sitting in their vehicles, sneak up to them when they were hiking, or find them

camping somewhere in the woods. On the radio, the announcer reported that everyone should be on the lookout for the man with the hook because he was very very dangerous.

Weeks went by and no one was able to catch this killer. Even after all the warnings over the radio the man continued to find unsuspecting victims to attack, sneaking up behind them when they least expected it, and striking out. One by one he would make mincemeat out of them with his razor sharp hook. No one could stop him.

I was glued to the tale, like having my head in a good book that I couldn't put down. It was certainly a page-turner, keeping me on the edge of my seat. I was in a trancelike state waiting to see how the story would end.

Joey continued to talk in a slow menacing voice. "He still lurks out there, somewhere in the woods, sneaking around and looking for his next victim. He will find you when you least expect it, coming out of nowhere and...and...GRABBING YOU WITH HIS HOOK!"

Right about then, someone forcefully grabbed me from behind. I jerked away and screamed. I heard other kids next to me do the same.

The man with the hook got me! I thought, panicking.

My heart was pounding so hard I thought it would come out of my chest. I could feel the hair rise on my skin. While the story was being told, several of the older boys had snuck around through the woods and had waited, ready to pounce at just the right moment.

"Not funny!" I yelled, "Cut it out!"

I could feel myself shaking, but I didn't want it to show. Other Scouts who were also the brunt of the joke made similar comments. After things had settled down, Brent stood up from his seat and took center stage again.

"Okay," said Brent, "Now it is time for the new Scout initiation. It is our tradition each time this year to do a group march through the woods blindfolded."

A group march? I thought skeptically. *Blindfolded?*

I wasn't sure what to think about this proposed activity – or initiation as Brent put it – but thought that as long as it was a group thing it couldn't be all that bad.

There were six new boys including myself. Each boy was blindfolded and had to stand directly behind the back of an older Scout who was facing forward and holding a flashlight. The new Scout had to put his hands on the shoulders of the older Scout and walk forward through the woods together. Each pair of Scouts would leave at about ten minute intervals. According to Brent, this initiation was the only way to prove our worthiness to be members of the Troop.

So I waited in line, blindfolded, and trembling in fright. I was the third one to go. I would be following a Scout named Kendall who was waiting with me to begin. Up ahead I could hear distant screams from the two boys who had left not long ago.

What did I get myself into here? I wondered, nervously.

Then it was my turn.

I placed my hands out and rested them on Kendall's back shoulders. As he moved forward so did I, trying to match his steps without tripping on the uneven ground. The last thing I wanted to do was stumble and fall on my face. It was helpful to have Kendall as a crutch if I tripped. I would just grab him and steady myself as needed.

This would all be over soon, I promised myself. I just needed to stick it out, be strong, and not mess it up. I already screwed up one too many times today, and this was the one thing I knew I could do. I was sure of it. With the guidance and protection of the Scout in front of me, I would return safely to the campsite, and pass the initiation into Troop 170.

We walked at a steady pace for several minutes and then stopped to take a break. Suddenly, up ahead I could hear other Scouts yelling and screaming.

"What was that?" I asked.

“Nothing to worry about,” said Kendall with confidence in his voice. “They must have tripped or something.”

Tripped? I wondered. What’s he talking about? Tripping wouldn’t cause THAT kind of screaming.

Then we were walking again. Several times I stubbed my foot on a root, rock, or some other object in the trail, but I was always able to keep my balance with my hands on Kendall’s shoulders. I was really lucky to have been paired up with Kendall who appeared very capable and trustworthy.

Good ole, reliable Kendall, I thought.

We were apparently on a dirt pathway somewhere in the woods. I could feel the narrowness of our wilderness passage as the low branches from trees and brush would scrape my body and slap at me along the way. Kendall was quite helpful in telling me when I was about to be hit with a ricocheting branch.

“Duck your head” he would say as a branch was about to fly. “Look out for this one” he would warn as he cocked back another branch before letting it go in my direction.

I ducked.

“And here’s another one” as he let it go.

I ducked again.

Each time he warned me I covered my face, not worried about the abuse to the rest of my body. I just didn’t want a bloody nose or deep scratches on my face for the mosquitoes feast on later as I slept. Worse, I certainly didn’t want to go home after the weekend with a black eye and have to convince my parents I wasn’t in a fight with anyone.

Again, I thought it was nice that Kendall constantly warned me ahead of time so I wouldn’t get a whiplash. I was really starting to get a good impression of these older Scouts, and feeling very good about my first real camping weekend. Having to go through this kind of initiation wasn’t all that bad to be inducted in such a fine organization. Kendall would get me through it safely.

We were getting farther and farther away from the campsite, and I couldn't tell if we were going in a straight line or circling around. But it was apparent that the noises from the campsite were getting fainter. Kendall rarely spoke or made a sound except for an occasional word or two.

"Are we almost there?" I asked.

"Shhh" was all he said.

I didn't say anything else for awhile. We had been walking over ten minutes and I was beginning to get a little nervous. I couldn't hear anymore familiar sounds, no more screams from the other Scouts ahead of me, and no more noises from the campsite. In my mind I pictured that it was miles and miles away, and the woods were probably just as dark as it was under my blindfold. But I did find comfort in knowing I wasn't alone out here, just in case we did get lost; and even though I didn't have a flashlight, I knew Kendall had one.

"How much longer are we going to do this?" I asked. I needed some kind of reassurance we were on the right track to complete this march and return safely to the campsite.

"Not much longer," he replied.

We walked for another minute in silence, and then suddenly, as I was standing with my arms outstretched, Kendall pulled away and...

Disappeared.

I couldn't feel him anywhere. I raked my hands through the air in front of me like a frantic mummy.

"Kendall? Kendall! Where are you?!"

I could hear someone scurrying away in the woods. I quickly pulled off my blindfold.

Darkness.

My eyes tried to adjust after being closed for so long. My heart rate seemed to increase tenfold, knowing I was alone in the deep, dark woods without a flashlight.

"Kendall? Kendall, where are you!"

I took several small steps in the darkness hoping I wouldn't trip on anything or get a sharp stick in the eye (my dad always warned me about running around in the woods and not watching for low branches that might "*poke an eye out*" as he put it). But, after several seconds, my eyes began to adjust and I could see silhouettes all around. After a few more seconds, my eyes made out what appeared to be a blanket of white dotted objects.

Gravestones! I thought.

Marble and granite statues of varying shapes and sizes dotted the landscape, stretching out in all directions, illuminated by the downward moonlight. Crosses, many leaning to and fro at eerie angles, were interspersed among the monuments. The silent stone sentries were standing guard over their unearthly possessions.

I knew these were not ordinary tombstones in an ordinary cemetery. Oh, no, that would be too easy. This had to be a cursed cemetery, possessed by demons and witches, ghosts and goblins, and forgotten over the years. I was convinced a cemetery like this one HAD to be haunted.

My next thought: *I was their prey, a wayward Scout, lost in the night, alone, and vulnerable.*

Dead alone.

Where did this cemetery come from? I wondered.

I was paralyzed with fear as my blood ran cold. I sucked in my breath and looked around. I could see trees and bushes silhouetted by the moonlit sky. I had to find my way back to the campsite. But which way should I go?

I was disoriented and confused from being blindfolded. The trees around the cemetery blocked my view of whatever lay beyond. Every direction looked the same with no clear sign of an exit. I strained my ears for sounds of the other boys back at camp. Not hearing anything, I started walking, hoping I would recognize the trail back or hear something familiar.

The sooner I get back the better, I thought.

The thought also ran through my mind that this was planned right from the very beginning. It wasn't the older boys leading the new Scouts around in the woods blindfolded, but rather, leading them around and then *leaving them alone in this graveyard*. That was the actual initiation. I vowed to make it back and not let anyone know how shocked and frightened I had been during the ordeal.

I was acutely aware of the breeze blowing through the trees and making an eerie whistling sound like some evil force trying to summon up the dead. The branches knocked and rattled like chains, as trees swayed back and forth. An evil presence was in the air tonight, and if I wasn't careful, it would be coming after me.

Something moved on my left – a shadow! It lumbered like it was dragging a bum leg as it ran behind a tall tombstone and disappeared.

My heart beat faster.

Then I saw another shadow lumbering away to my right and disappearing behind a different tombstone.

My heart beat even faster.

Zombies, I thought. *They were moving like zombies. The undead was coming alive to invite me to their evil underworld.*

I had to get out of there – and fast!

I walked as quickly as possible, knowing I had to be careful not to trip on any limbs, gravestones, or anything dead. I could see the starlit sky above, the outline of the trees, and many tombstones, but I had trouble seeing smaller objects on the ground only a short distance away.

Just then I could faintly hear the sounds of the Scouts in the distance somewhere off to my left. I altered my direction and kept going. Finally, there was a hopeful sign. Now all I had to do was follow it back to the other boys.

Okay, I thought. *Now I know which way to go. Take a deep breath and keep walking. I'm going to get out of this one alive. Just a few more moments and I'll be back....*

I took another step and I couldn't find the ground. My whole body fell forward into a cold dark pit about six feet deep. I caught most of my fall with both hands, but my face still hit the dirt hard. I was temporarily stunned. A few seconds later when I had regained my senses, I leaned up and shook my head. My mouth was sore and bleeding. I spit out a mouthful of dirt.

Gross! I thought. I hope there are no bugs in here!

All I could think about at that very moment was the possibility I had gotten a bunch of nasty creepy crawly bugs in my mouth floating around in my saliva. I was convinced there had to be at a nice big juicy one in there somewhere. I kept spitting out wads of dirt, saliva, blood and, most assuredly, bugs.

I thought about the kinds of bugs I had seen before while digging for crawlers in the past. Creatures with their small wiggly bodies, long antennae, and more than 100 legs; slugs with their slimy wormlike bodies with tentacles on their heads; ants with ugly armored bodies, compound eyes, and bony stick legs; and, of course, spiders with those long hairy legs, big bodies, and small heads ready to pounce on you at any moment.

Which one these did I get in my mouth? I wondered.

I suddenly realized I was in a cold, dark grave dug for someone ready to be buried.

But that someone was not me.

I regained my senses completely and jumped up, not knowing if I should call out for help. I tried to yell but the words got stuck in my throat. I reached up with my hands and clawed my way out of the grave like a vampire coming alive and exiting his tomb.

When I reached the surface, I looked around for a way out of the cemetery. There were human-like shadows moving around the tombstones, making eerie noises, and laughing a

most demonic laugh. They were going to have fun with me tonight.

I still couldn't find my voice to scream.

"Philip, come this way," said one of the ghoulish figures from behind a large headstone. "We want to play with you."

Then from another corner of the graveyard came this voice: "Philip, why don't you stay for dinner tonight. By the way – you ARE dinner."

I took two steps backwards, away from the noise, as something cold and bony grabbed my ankle. I yanked my foot away quickly and ran in the opposite direction, not caring if I tripped on gravestones or got beat up by a tree limb. I ran for a short time and began to hear the sounds of the kids back at the campsite. My feet were pounding on the path while my hands were up in the air shielding my face from the branches.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

I had to get back to the campsite fast and away from the decrepit voices in the graveyard. However, I sensed they were right behind me ready to pounce at any moment. I could hear their rotten bony footsteps keeping pace with mine. They were on my back about to drag me down with their gnarly fingers and devour me from head to toe. I could hear movement on my heels. I had to outrun them.

I pushed forward through the trees and brush getting closer to the campsite with every step. The creatures were at my rear, busting through the branches, getting closer and closer. If I could just make it back to the campfire I would be alright.

Within minutes I had made it through the woods, all scratched up, bloody, and dirty. My heart was pounding. This was an awful trick to play on me. Were those figures lurking in the graveyard other Scouts trying to scare me, or were they really demons? I quickly went into my tent, slipped into my sleeping bag, and zipped it up tight. I covered my head with a pillow and made sure my arms and legs were not sticking out.

I did not Rest in Peace that night.

THREE-FINGERED WILLIE

I heard this story for the first time in the summer of 1974 at the Katahdin Scout Reservation (KSR) in Bangor, Maine. The tale is traditionally told by one of the camp counselors every year. It sure did make me want to sleep away from the edge of the tent flaps that night. Since then, I have never looked at a latrine in the same way.

Scouts of all ages and ranks, please take your seats around this brilliant and comforting campfire as I tell you the true history of this Scout Camp you are attending here today. As you look out to the west you will see a big murky lake. Just past the big murky lake on the far side you will see some rocky cliffs. Beyond the rocky cliffs there is a dark and dense forest of cedar and pine. Deep in the cedar and pine there dwells an evil man named "Three-fingered Willie."

But this story really begins in the 1940s when a man and his wife moved into these woods. They built a small rustic cabin which provided their only shelter and lodging. Soon they had a son named Willie who was born in those woods. As he grew up, they taught him wilderness survival skills. As a teenager he was able to outwit and kill any beast with his bare hands. He hunted wolves, coyotes, and bears. You see, Willie was as big and strong as an ox, and no man or animal around could match his great strength. He worked hard every day around his parents' camp, chopping firewood and hunting game. He was content with his life and seemed quite happy.

It was during the summer when Willie was fifteen when young boys of all ages came to Scout Camp for the week. Willie could hear all the laughter and excitement from across the water as the surface of the lake is a great carrier of sound – especially on a warm night like this one. He had heard the sounds of Scouts each year at this time, but never dared to cross the lake to see what was going on because he was too shy and not old enough to be on his own. However, on this particular day, his curiosity got the better of him. He snuck over to see what was going on. He was careful not to show

himself as he watched the games and fun the Scouts were having. He wished he could be having so much fun.

Well that night, Willie decided to explore further into one of the campsites. He went from tent to tent as everyone was sleeping and he looked inside each one. At one of the tents he stopped – the last one mind you – and a most dreadful and awful thing happened. The young Tenderfoot Scout, Joey Smith, was sleeping inside and woke up to hear Willie rustling about with the tent flaps. Joey grabbed the hatchet he had under his pillow and threw it at Willie with all his might. It struck Willie in the hand, severing his pinky and thumb completely off. In a state of anger, Willie grabbed Joey by the leg, pulled him out of the tent, and broke his neck with one snap of his bloody hands. Willie was angry and believed that the Scouts had plotted to kill him. He wanted to kill more Scouts. But the sun was about to rise and camp was beginning to stir, so he hurried off. As he was leaving, he swiped his three remaining fingers on the side of Joey's tent to leave his bloody mark. He vowed revenge for what they had done to him.

The next morning, the Scouts lined up and sounded off, “1, 2, 3, 4”, and so on. When they got to number “7” – Joey's number – he did not answer. They called his name out loud while searching the campsite. After peeking into his tent, they found his dead mangled body inside.

Camp was closed for the rest of the summer and a big search was made for the “three-fingered” murderer. The searchers knew that they were looking for a three-fingered person because of finding his bloody thumb and pinky fingers on the floor of Joey's tent as well as the bloody three-fingered print left on the side of the tent.

The number of people looking for him was immense. About fifteen miles from the Scout Camp the searchers found a cabin where a man and his wife lived. Neither one could be the murderer because they both had their right thumb and

pinky intact. The couple said they had a son, Willie, who lived somewhere in the woods. They had not seen him in quite some time.

The search party guessed that Willie had to be the murderer. They searched the parents' cabin just in case they were lying about their son not being there. But Willie was not found. The parents told the search party that Willie knew the woods like the back of his hand, and could hide from anybody, being an expert at survival. They said he would never allow himself to be captured. After several more days of searching, the group gave up and went home.

The following year, the leaders decided to have Scout Camp again. As before, the Scouts all laughed, played, and had fun, making lots of noises that carried along the warm summer air, across the big murky lake and cliffs, and into the dark forest of cedar and pine. In that forest the sound reached the dwelling of the angry and murderous Three-fingered Willie. Oh, yes, Willie was *still* angry and *still* murderous. He remembered his vow from last summer.

He made his way through the dark forest of cedar and pine, over the rocky cliffs, and across the big murky lake in his boat. Using his great stealth, Willie snuck into the campsite late at night when the Scouts were sleeping. He picked a tent that was farthest away from the campfire. This happened to be the tent of little Star Scout Frankie Jones. He slowly unzipped the tent flaps which made a faint “zzzzp” sound as it moved upward to the top. Reaching into the tent, he grabbed little Frankie by the ankle and dragged him out of the tent quickly before he could make a sound and choked him to death. Then Willie used the sharp fingernails on his three-fingered hand to leave his signature on the side of the tent. After he was done, he dragged Frankie's lifeless body along the ground to the latrine where he cut up the body into little pieces with a camp saw and stuck Frankie's head in the urinal funnel facing forward to greet the next person who entered the building. Oh,

yes, everyone would know that “Three-fingered Willie” had been there.

The next morning, the first Scout to go into the bathroom to do his duty screamed his head off (because of seeing the head that was *off*, of course). Scout camp was immediately closed again that summer and another search was made for Three-fingered Willie. The search party went across the big murky lake, over the rocky cliffs, and through the dark forest of cedar and pine, to the little cabin where Willie’s parents lived. But, like before, he was not there. His parents said that he lived in the forest and that he was very good at hiding.

There was a massive outpouring of support to find him. The National Guard came with their helicopters and night vision scopes. The police came with their binoculars and search dogs. Even the best Eagle Scouts came with all their tracking ability and orienteering skills. But no one could find him.

Scout Camp was kept closed for the rest of that summer in hopes that Willie would be found and brought to justice, but unfortunately, he was not. Then a third year passed, and a fourth and a fifth. The campsites were all quiet and empty during those five years. No laughter or other happy sounds crossed that big murky lake on the warm summer wind.

After five long years, it was decided that Scout Camp would open back up. But half the sites were empty. Many Scouts did not return because of what had happened to young Joey and Frankie. But some brave Scouts did, hoping that Willie would not be around. However, they were *DEAD* wrong.

One night Willie made his way through the dark forest of cedar and pine, over the rocky cliffs, and across the big murky lake in his boat. He picked a tent that was farthest away from the campfire where Second Class Scout Johnny Peters slept. He slowly unzipped the tent flaps which made a faint “*zzzzp*” sound as it moved upward to the top. He reached in and

grabbed Johnny's foot and dragged him out of his tent. With his good hand, Willie covered Johnny's mouth so that he could not make a sound. With his other hand, he left his signature slash mark on the side of the tent. Then he dragged Johnny to the boat where he took him across the big murky lake, over the rocky cliffs, and through the dark forest of cedar and pine. In that forest, Willie tied Johnny to a tree and chopped him up with an ax.

The next day the Scouts had role call before breakfast. The Scouts sounded off "1, 2, 3" – but there was no Scout # "4." Johnny Peters was missing. When the Scouts walked up to his tent they knew right away what had happened when they saw the three bloody slash marks on the side of the tent.

Three-fingered Willie got him.

But Johnny's body was not in his tent, latrine, or anywhere else in the campsite. A decision was made to immediately close Scout Camp and search for Second Class Scout Johnny. They all feared the absolute worst – he was dead from the hands of Three-fingered Willie. Just like before, there was a search for the murderer but he was not found. Instead, the search party found the bloody remains of Johnny Peters near a tree.

So Scout Camp was closed for another five years in hopes that Three-fingered Willie would be captured during that time, but he was not. The following summer – the sixth one after the murder of Johnny – it was decided that Scout Camp would be reopened. There was a small group of brave Scouts that attended that summer. They worked, played, laughed, sang songs, and had fun. But of course, all this activity made Willie very angry because it was a Scout that had cut off his two fingers with the hatchet many years ago. So when he heard the noise coming again from across the big murky lake on that warm summer day, he decided to seek his revenge.

One night he made his way through the dark forest of cedar and pine, over the rocky cliffs, and across the big murky lake

in his boat. He picked a tent that was farthest away from the campfire where a First Class Scout Denny Flanders slept. He slowly unzipped the tent which made a faint “zzzzp” sound as it moved upward. He grabbed Denny by the ankle and pulled him out of the tent. With one jerk of his hands he broke Denny’s neck. Using a camp saw, he cut off Denny’s head and put it in the urinal funnel. And of course, he left his signature on the side of the tent with his three-fingered hand. Then he quietly left in his boat.

The next day, the first Scout to enter the latrine was Eagle Scout Bobbie Winters. When Bobbie saw Denny’s head in the urinal funnel he screamed his head off. There was mass panic in the campground. No one doubted that Three-fingered Willie had struck again.

A search party was formed made up of the best Scoutmasters, Eagle Scouts, Leadership Corp, local police, state police, FBI, CIA, SWAT teams, Canadian Mounties, and the United States military units. There were twenty Sheriff’s deputies with twenty search dogs, helicopters, jeeps, and tanks. There was even a camera crew from the local TV-4 news trying to videotape his capture. All these people searched and searched for weeks. This time they found something: Willie’s secret cabin.

As they approached the building, they saw Willie chopping wood, but before they could capture him, he sensed that they were there and ran inside.

The men ordered him out or they would burn the cabin to the ground. They waited with their guns pointed at the door, but Willie did not come out. After warning him several more times with no success, the men made torches and lit the cabin on fire. In a matter of hours, everything was burned to ashes.

They approached the cabin cautiously with weapons ready to fire just in case Willie had survived the towering inferno. When they searched for his body in the ashes and rumble, they could not find him. One of the men in the search party started

poking around and found a secret trap door on the floor. When it was opened, they found an underground tunnel where Willie had escaped.

He had outsmarted them again.

Scout Camp was reopened many times over the coming years, but each time another Scout would be brutally murdered by Three-fingered Willie. Sometimes the other Scouts would find their friend's remains in his tent, by a tree, or in the camp latrine.

So, for many years there was no laughter and fun to be heard at Scout Camp. Scouts went camping elsewhere. But no matter where they roamed, each Scout thought about "Three-fingered Willie" when they went to sleep at night. They sometimes heard scratching noises on the sides of their tents and imagined that Willie was leaving his signature mark there. When the Scouts went to the latrine, they carefully opened the door and peeked inside for any signs of a severed head in the urinal funnel. And no Scout wanted to be in the tent farthest away from the campfire because...

Three-fingered Willie still lurks out there, somewhere, seeking his revenge.

THE MILLPOND MONSTER

In March 1880 my home town of Mapleton was officially incorporated as a township in Maine. Before 1880, it was called "Ball's Mill" after the man who started the saw mill in the center of town. Ball dammed a portion of the stream and created a large pool of water that flowed into the mill operation. One of the Ball brothers is buried on the east bank of the brook near the mill's location. The mill is gone now but there is still a dammed area which creates a large pool of water – the "Millpond" – to the south of the bridge where it is located. The local fire department fills their tanks in this large reservoir of water. The Millpond has always been a perfect place for a do-it-yourself skating rink in the middle of the winter. It was considered safe for skating a few months out of the year. But because it was close to the dam, the faster water could make the ice thinner in spots, allowing the Millpond Monster to break through and claim its next victim....

"Come on, guys, quit throwing snowballs and start shoveling," yelled Jason to a group of boys who were pitching snowballs at each other. "We've got to get this ice cleared off before dark so we can skate tonight."

There was a full moon planned for later which would help illuminate the rink nicely for this midwinter sport. Skating on the Millpond under a blanket of stars was a tradition in Mapleton for older teenagers. There wasn't much else to do except play pinball at Pedro's Pizzeria or drive back and forth through town – that is, if you had your license and a suitable hotrod which I was sorely lacking in both. But I did have my permit and I knew at this same time next year I would be one of the "toolers" who "tooled" around Main Street with nothing else better to do but to check out the sights from one end of town to the other.

Today was the first day in February and I was shoveling off snow from the Millpond with a few other kids from town. I was 15. Most of the kids there were older than me. All I could think about was how it was so cool that my folks were finally going to let me skate here this year. They were always worried about the ice breaking through and me drowning. I'm sure

they probably had good reason to worry after what happened five years ago.

Back then it had been a strange winter in northern Maine, starting off quite normal with lots of snow and cold weather. However, by mid February some unseasonably warm weather had moved in. Two full days of warm rain beat down on the little town of Mapleton and its Millpond causing the snow to melt completely. What was left was a perfect sheet of ice. It was so clear you could see the water flowing underneath it. I had heard the older kids were delighted they didn't have to shovel the snow. God had managed to clean up the area with the help of Mother Nature.

But no one could have predicted the danger in the ice. It seemed thick enough when checked by some of the local town folk. However, what they didn't know was that the current below the water was wearing the ice thin in some spots. After a few nights of skating with all the weight of numerous teenagers, it became quite unsafe.

I wasn't there when it happened but it doesn't take long for news to travel in a small town. Most of the kids who were there that night talked about it for days to come. It seems that on the third night of skating on that glassy surface, little Jimmy Powers fell through. Witnesses heard the cracking sound followed by a scream and splash. No one dared get too close to the hole for fear of falling in themselves. Everywhere there were broken ice chunks floating around. Some of the kids nearby screamed and yelled for help. A few of the skaters tried to reach him by lying down on the ice and sliding their bodies as close as they could to the hole. They didn't dare get too close or they would be falling through as well. They got within ten or fifteen feet but couldn't see him.

As they were lying face down on the ice trying to reach him, he suddenly appeared in the transparency beneath them. His face was pressed against the ice, eyes wide open, and he was scratching at the underside with his hands. His winter

clothes and boots were surely heavy with water and dragging him down. The kids followed his body through the clear ice for several yards watching him struggle until he disappeared somewhere in the depths below. Later that night search crews with flood lights broke through the ice by the dam and found his dead body wedged against some rocks.

That was five years ago. As with most accidents, life goes on and traditions continue. Since Jimmy died, stories have circulated around the town that it might not have been an accident. You see, some eye witnesses swear something from below broke through the ice and pulled him under.

For many years leading up to Jimmy's death there had been a legend about a creature or monster that lived in the waters. The pond was known to be very deep – bottomless they say – and a perfect place for such a creature to live and hide. There had been some sightings of a giant eel-type creature breaking the surface. Other times fishermen swear on their mothers' graves something big hit the underside of their boats. One fisherman saw a duck floating by on the river which was suddenly sucked underneath by a long dark shape. Town folk just laughed off these stories and blamed it on the bottle being tipped.

But strange as it may seem, people have found large holes in the ice while snowshoeing, some three and four feet in diameter, and much bigger than would normally be used in ice fishing. The edges were jagged like teeth marks had made them. One man, Hubert Goodman, even claims to have found a large tooth embedded in the edge of the hole. Those who have seen it can not identify it as belonging to any known animal. Such a find only supported the notion of a deep water creature lurking in the depths below.

So after Jimmy Powers drowned the rumors started flying around.

"The Millpond monster got him!" said Big Eddy on the bus one day.

“It broke through the ice and grabbed his leg with its big fanged mouth,” said a fifteen year old bully named Douglas while playing a game of Pitch Penny on the playground.

But of course, these were only stories told by teenagers to scare younger kids; the same ones who liked to scare little kids with stories about UFOs, Big Foot, and the little green men from Mars. The Millpond Monster was just another one of these stories which somehow manages to stay in the local folklore.

I pushed the snow shovel ahead of me until I reached one side of the rink, dumped the snow from the blade, and began the same process in the opposite direction, going back and forth, left to right, right to left, and so on. Other kids were doing the same thing from different positions on the ice. Within a few hours we had an area big enough to skate on. Jason, one of the older boys two years ahead of me in school, had a father who worked for the Fire Department and planned on coming down with the tanker truck to flood the rink with water to put the finishing touches on it. I left, shovel in hand, with plans to return later with my skates and join in on the fun.

Just before I left for the night, my parents discussed whether the ice was thick enough to skate on.

“Be careful,” warned my mom. “And be home by 10 p.m.

“Stay clear of the dam now,” my dad said. “The ice is probably thinner there.”

I tied my skates together, slung them over my shoulder, and said goodbye to them as I ran out the door. I was finally on my way to my first night of skating with the older kids. I ran for a bit then walked and rested before running some more. About a half a mile down Pulcifer road, I ran into my friend, Jacob. Jacob was two years younger than me. His parents allowed him to do *a lot* more than my parents did at his age. Jacob had been skating at the Millpond for the past three years. We walked the remaining half mile until we could see the cars

lined up along the roadway and other kids walking in the direction of the rink.

We stopped at bridge above the dam and looked down at the ice. There were already many people skating. Some of the kids were sitting on snow banks watching while others were huddled around a small fire upstream smoking cigarettes and trying to stay warm. Suzanne, Tracy, and Deborah were skating together in the middle of the rink, spinning around in a circle while holding hands. These three girls did *everything* together. If you saw one, you saw all three. Brad, Steve, and Jason were skating alone trying to show off for some girls on the sidelines. Cindy and Bonnie were throwing snowballs at some of the guys next to the fire. More kids were showing up in cars.

Yes, this was a great feeling to come down here to the rink with the older crowd. As I was getting my skates on, I looked around to see if Lynn was there. For the past two years I had developed a crush on her. We rode the same bus together. She was quiet and read sometimes in the back. I watched her from my bus window getting on and off at her stop. But I never got the courage to talk with her. She probably didn't even know I existed. I wanted to ask her out to a movie at the Braden, or to one of the school dances, but I always chickened out. The bus ride was not the best place to ask a girl out. But maybe she would be here tonight and I would talk with her, maybe even ask her to skate with me. I hoped she would be there. Everyone else in town seemed to be. I looked for her one more time as I stood up on my skates to enter the rink but couldn't see her anywhere.

I pushed off on one foot and slid forward. I had skated many times before and was confident I wouldn't have any problems tonight. However, I wasn't prepared for the "show off" who was racing around the rink. He nearly knocked me over. I avoided being hit, but could not avoid losing my balance and falling flat on my butt.

Oh, great, I thought. Nice move wiping out right away. Everyone is going to think I am a klutz.

I got back up as quickly as I could, brushed off the snow from my pants, and kept on skating. I was determined not to let that happen again.

I thought: If Lynn is here somewhere, I hope she didn't see me fall.

I skated around the outer perimeter of the rink where it seemed a little safer. "Sweet Home Alabama" blared from somebody's boom box along the shore while the steady sounds of steel meeting ice accompanied.

The full moon was just peaking above the trees as I circled the rink for the umpteenth time. I was trying hard to look cool on the outside while I was feeling rather uneasy on the inside. I was thinking about what had happened to little Jimmy five years ago. I looked around, wondering where on the ice he had actually fallen through. I suddenly felt the urge to look for cracks. It was hard to hear any cracking sounds because of all the noise around me – especially as more and more kids were entering the ice rink.

I thought the worse. What if there is too much weight on the ice and it breaks with one HUGE splash and everyone drowns? What if there really IS a creature that lives deep under the water waiting to break through and grab its next victim?

I looked around and saw Lynn. She was on the shore with her older sister, Kate.

Okay, I thought. Here was my opportunity to talk with her. Maybe I'll ask her to skate with me. Feet don't fail me now. I will be so embarrassed if she sees me fall on my face or butt.

"Hey Philip," said Bruce, an older boy who always teased me at school. "Don't let the Millpond Monster get you."

Bruce was a junior this year. Last year he constantly tried to pull pranks on me as a freshman, saying that it was "freshman initiation." His "initiation" included giving me

“wedgies,” “noogies,” and trying to trip me in the halls. Sometimes he threatened to beat me up. I always watched myself around him so that I was not embarrassed in front of my friends. The last thing I wanted with Lynn nearby was to have Jason pull my underwear up high in the back and yell “wedgee!” clear across the rink.

Bruce continued to taunt me.

“The Monster’s gonna get you. The Monster’s gonna get you,” he teased in a sing-song style voice.

I just ignored him and skated away to find a spot with less people. I glided slowly round the rink looking for Lynn. Suddenly someone pushed me from behind and nearly knocked me over.

“Hey, what did you go and do that for?” I asked angrily.

I didn’t realize at the time it was my friend, Jacob, who wasn’t being mean, but only wanted to get my attention.

“Come on, Philip,” said Jacob, “They’re setting up the Limbo stick. Let’s go. Come on!”

He was heading to the center of the rink so I followed. Other kids were lining up in a single row on the ice while the eighteen-year-olds, Josh and Brian, were standing several feet apart facing each other and holding a small maple sapling between them on their shoulders to form the Limbo stick.

Brian yelled, “It’s Limbo time. How *lowwww* can you go?”

I got in line and followed the skaters in front of me. The first time under was a breeze, barely even having to duck my head at all. I circled around the edge of the rink and made my way around to the end of the line which stretched backward toward the dam, getting longer and longer as other kids began showing up to play the game. I went under the stick for the second time and had no trouble navigating it despite the lower setting.

I circled back slowly, hoping to get in line next to Lynn for my third pass. I stalled a little waiting for her to make her

second pass under the stick. As she was on her way to the back of the line, I timed my entry just ahead of her and waited. I heard her skate up behind me. I innocently turned around and looked at her.

“Hi Lynn,” I said.

“Hi Philip,” she replied.

She knew my name. She actually knew my name.

“Come here often?” I asked.

“No, the rink hasn’t been opened yet this year.”

I felt like an idiot but I tried to compensate by saying, “Yeah, I know, but did you come last year or is this your first time?”

“My parents wouldn’t let me come last year. This is my first time.”

“Oh,” I replied, “Me too.”

I dared not say anymore or else she would *really* think I was an idiot. I looked ahead and kept shuffling forward on my skates waiting for my third pass under the stick. I thought about what I would say to her when I returned to the line. Perhaps I would just come out and ask her the big question: *Do you want to skate with me after Limbo?*

So under the stick I went for the third time. This pass was more difficult. I had to duck my head and squat down to clear the stick without knocking it over. As I circled back, I watched Lynn go under the stick smoothly and gracefully. She was a very good skater. I wondered what she thought about my skating.

My heart quickened. I knew in just a few moments I would be turning around and asking her if she wanted to skate with me. What if she said no? What if she laughed at me? But what if she said yes? Would I hold her hand? What if I fell down? Would everyone laugh at me? Would they laugh at her for wanting to skate with me?

I got back in line for my fourth pass under the stick. More people had arrived and the line was much longer. It stretched

back past the shoveled area where skaters were standing in the snow. I found myself a little uneasy being so close to the dam. My parents had warned me about this very situation. But I couldn't say anything because the others would really think I was a wimp. A few seconds later, Lynn joined in behind me.

I slowly moved forward with the line waiting for my opportunity to ask her the big question. I could hear her talking with someone. It sounded like her sister. In front, I could hear kids chanting, "Limbo, Limbo, how *low* can you go?" I saw one kid fall on his butt under the stick. It looked like he would make it with no problem but he must have tripped on his laces or something else and was disqualified. A really tall kid bumped the stick and was told that he was out. He argued about it for awhile and swore out loud, but eventually had to leave the game. Then the stick was lowered again for our next pass.

I had to ask her this time or else my luck would probably run out on my next Limbo attempt sending me to the sidelines to watch the rest of the competition.

I turned, looked her way, and said, "Lynn, do you want to skate with me later?"

I saw her sister, Kate, looking up at me from behind Lynn. I hoped she would not say anything to dissuade her from saying yes. But either way, I was prepared for disappointment. It seemed like minutes, but was only a split second, when Lynn replied, "Sure."

I was elated and tongue-tied.

We both moved forward without saying a word. Kids were lined up behind us, laughing and screaming. Other kids were not playing the game, but were skating around, watching. When it was my turn, I sat down on my ankles with my arms around my knees and pushed myself forward, gliding well under the stick. I stood back up, happy to have made it at least one more time, and circled back, watching as Lynn went through with no problem as well.

I skated to the end of the line which stretched back even farther now because more people had joined in despite the game being almost over. Apparently some people had arrived late and still wanted to play. I looked downstream at the dammed area and heard the water as it was spilled over the edge of concrete and rocks about fifty feet away.

The ice *felt* strong enough here.

I waited for Lynn. She skated up behind me and took her place in line. I turned to look at her just as the ice broke with a loud *CRASH*. I instinctively fell forward away from the noise. I could feel my feet falling into the water. I dug my hands into the solid ice in front of me desperately trying to hold my upper body out of the water, grasping and pulling with all my strength.

I heard someone scream. Kids were running and skating at the same time away from the broken ice. I pulled and dug as hard as I could. The weight of my legs was trying to pull me down into the cold murky depths. Somehow I managed to get out of the water.

I spun my body around and looked out at the open water with chunks of ice bouncing around.

“Lynn!” I yelled, looking frantically around for her in the water. I reached out as far as I dared toward the edge of the hole. Just then her right hand appeared out of the water and I grabbed it as her other hand grabbed for something solid.

“Somebody grab my leg!” I yelled as Lynn’s hand slipped away, leaving me holding her empty glove in my hand like a parting gift as she dropped back under the surface of the water.

I threw her glove aside. “Somebody grab my leg quick!”

Someone shimmied up behind me and grabbed my leg. I heard someone yell, “Make a chain! Hurry! We don’t have much time.”

There was a rustling noise as people were making a human chain stretching upstream and away from the hole. I could feel

tension on my right leg and I knew that I would be okay as long as the person behind me did not let go.

Lynn resurfaced again and reached out her hand. This time I grabbed it and held on.

“Don’t let go,” I said to her desperately. “Hold on.”

I wasn’t sure I was strong enough to pull her out of the water myself. Her heavy winter coat and snow pants were soaked and certainly weighing her down. I was also worried the strain of pulling her out would break more ice at the edge of the hole, sending myself and others into the water.

I could feel the strong current pulling on her body. I couldn’t believe she was strong enough to hold her position without being dragged downstream.

“Just hold on,” I encouraged. “We’re going to get you out.”

I heard Lynn shout, “Get me out of here!”

She was gasping and choking, trying to spit the water out of her mouth. Waves were bouncing against her face. She coughed some more and tried to talk. “Help...me!”

“I’ll get you out. I won’t let go. Just keep trying to pull yourself onto the ice.”

I coaxed her to use her strength and inch herself little by little from the water as I pulled.

I knew we couldn’t do this all at once. If we could just get her upper body on the ice we could pull the rest of her out with no problem.

“Something is pulling my legs,” she said as the open water splashed against her face.

The Millpond Monster I thought. *It was trying to drag her down.*

“Just hang on. As I am pulling I want you to try and pull yourself up at the same time, okay? Come on now, pull!”

I yelled to the line behind me to pull on my leg. I felt a tug and my skate nearly came off my foot.

Oh, no, I thought. If my skate comes off while we’re pulling I might lose my balance and fall in.

Quickly I felt a strong set of hands repositioning themselves on my ankle. I felt more confident and pulled as hard as I could. At the same time, I tried to inch my way backward on my stomach. Lynn was almost out of the water when she was suddenly *pulled* back in. The jerk was much too strong and I lost my grip on her hand. As she went under, her eyes bulged out in surprise.

Impossible I thought. *Something actually PULLED her right out of my hands.*

I stared in disbelief. Could it have been the current? I knew it was probably stronger here being so close to the dam, but it seemed much too forceful, not like a steady pull but like a jerk. Something had caught her lower legs in such a manner as to suck her whole body back in.

Or maybe it was the Millpond Monster.

My hands were getting numb from the cold water. I worried that my grip would be weakened by the dropping temperature. I desperately searched for her and yelled her name. Then she reappeared. I grabbed her hand in one of mine as I used the other one to brace myself on the ice.

“Help me,” she cried out more desperately. “It’s got my legs. Something’s got my legs. I can’t hold on much longer.”

I looked past her face. The water was murky and filled with broken ice chunks bouncing around the choppy waves. It was hard to see what was below the surface. But something was definitely under there. There was no doubt about it. I could see something moving – something big. It was long, black and snakelike. I could see it trying to wrap itself around her foot as she was trying to kick it away.

This has got to be my imagination, I thought. I’ve got to get her out of here – and quick!

I held onto her hand as I tried to push backwards on the ice with my free one. But it wasn’t working. I needed leverage. I was worried that if I grabbed her hand in both of mine she (and the creature below) would pull me in. But I had to trust

the people behind me not to let go. Otherwise, I would never be able to get her out safely.

“Hang on tight behind me!” I yelled back. “I’m going to pull hard.”

I grabbed her hand and wrist with both of my hands and yelled for her to pull as hard as she could. With all my might, I pulled as she pulled. I felt her body lunge forward toward me until her upper body was up on the ice. The people behind me kept the slack out of the chain by pulling as I moved backward. Most of her body was out of the water now. The person behind me continued to hang onto my legs.

“Pull again!” I yelled to those behind me. With one more heave, the rest of Lynn’s legs came out of the water and onto the ice shelf next to me.

“Keep pulling!” I yelled as we all slid back a few feet at a time. When we were far enough away from the hole, I stood up and dragged Lynn a few more feet on her stomach before helping her up. I put my arms around her waist to hold her from falling. Her sister Kate came up with some other kids. Together they helped her walk to the shoreline and up the embankment.

“Does anyone have a blanket?” I heard someone yell.

“I do – in my car. I’ll go get it,” someone else replied.

I shivered as I staggered up the side of the hill toward the parking lot. I saw someone throw a blanket on her. She said “thank you” politely with a noticeable shiver in her voice.

“Are you alright? Are you alright?” asked her sister Kate.

“I’m cold. I thought I was going to die. Something was pulling me down. I could feel it tugging and tugging.”

Kate and a few other kids were helping her toward a vehicle that would take her somewhere warm.

“We need to get you home right away and get you out of these wet clothes,” said Kate.

I watched as Lynn was about to enter the vehicle.

“Wait,” she said.

She turned around and looked back at me. In a trembling voice she said, "Thank you Philip. Maybe we could have that skate another time."

Then she turned back around, entered the car, and took off. I watched the red taillights get dimmer as they reached the far side of town then turn onto her road.

The Millpond Monster would not claim another victim this night.

OUTHOUSE JOHN

“Outhouse John” was a spontaneous creation of my very imaginative Scout buddy, Mark Weaver, during one of our many camping trips together, designed to scare some of the newest recruits from entering the latrine. Back then there was no area of our campsite we considered off limits for a good haunting. I must say, it was pretty effective. In later years, I reproduced it in a poem format...

Grab your smores and get to your seat
And I'll tell ya 'bout Outhouse John & Trashcan Pete

Now John was a dirty, smelly troll
Who lived in the bottom of outhouse holes

While some Scouts sat to grunt and grin
Outhouse John would pull them in

Other Scouts escaped with their pants to their knees
Screaming their warnings as they ran through the trees

“Don't go in there! Don't you dare!
Or you'll get pulled into his evil lair!”

During Camporees Scouts became missing
Off in the distance John was a hissing

One Scout, two Scouts, three Scouts, four
Never made it back through that outhouse door

Each Scout prayed for a hero or a fool
To battle that creature in the septic pool

When out of a pile of garbage should appear
A maggotty monster with a green toothed sneer

“I'm your warrior, call me Trashcan Pete,
And I'm not afraid to go through that toilet seat.”

“You see, like a Scout, a good deed I can do
And make the latrine much safer for you.”

So Pete grabbed a flashlight and a cedar walking stick
That was carved by our own favorite Scoutmaster Dick

And so he started on his downward climb
Looking for John in the murky slime

Pushing away paper, underwear and debris
All he could find were brown lumps and pee

So he was about to give up and climb to the top
When John grabbed his leg back into the slop

They struggled and fought in that murky waste
Ignoring the odor, the floaties and the taste

Biff, bang, bump and splash
They were throwing wet bombs and talking trash

John hit Pete with a roundhouse punch
Pete bent over and blew his lunch

John struck Pete with a karate chop
And bonked his head with a dirty old mop

It looked like the end for our stinky friend Pete
The Scouts watched in horror as he was about to be beat

But all of a sudden from the bowels came a rumble
Pete let out some gas that would make any Scout stumble

He grabbed the plunger and as he knelt
He hit John squarely below the belt

The Scouts cheered loudly as John lost the fight
And watched him slink away into the night

After a search the missing Scouts were found
In John's dungeon deep underground

The Scouts were all happy as they were once before
It was now safe to enter the outhouse door

But if you listen closely, you can still hear
A splish and a splash coming up from the rear

But don't be alarmed and don't be afraid
It's only the sound that is normally made

John is gone now to a far away land
Thanks to Pete in his stinky garbage can.

BLOODY HALF-ACRE

As a young lad growing up in the 1970s in northern Maine I would have been in a coma not to have ever heard the stories about "Bloody Half-Acre" and "Big Jim Cullen." 1973 was the year I started Scouting which also coincided with the 100 year anniversary of the mob lynching of Big Jim in my home town of Mapleton (formerly known as Ball's Mill before 1880). I reckon the tales were told a lot more that year due to the anniversary. The lynching is reported to be the only known one in New England's history. We all knew the famous landmarks and pointed them out coincidentally at times while we were riding the school bus or traveling with our parents: The store where Jim stole the oversized boots; the site of the brutal ax murders at "bloody half acre"; the house where Jim was found (which still stands today); and the spot where he was hanged. I heard those stories enough times to have them etched into my memory. It goes something like this...

It was late April 1873. Jim Cullen was a Canadian from New Brunswick who had made his way to Ball's Mill to make a home and work in the woods. He was in his late 20s. He lived with a local woman named Twist and her child about a mile west of town. "Big Jim," as he was called, stood well over six foot tall and weighed more than 250 pounds. He was as strong as an ox and feared by many for his strength.

Rumor had it that Jim was stealing things from the Dudley store in the middle of town. Mr. Dudley knew it was Jim but feared confronting him because of his size. He was tired of the petty thefts so he decided to set a trap for Jim by hanging a large pair of boots in the window of the store to lure him into stealing them. Then he would turn him into the sheriff. Sure enough, the store was broken into one night and the boots were missing. From the size of the footprints in the snow leading up to the store window where the culprit had entered, the owner knew it had to be Cullen.

Now Dudley was friends with a man named Hubbard. Hubbard recently bought the home where Cullen lived. Hubbard was angry with Cullen for not vacating the house after Hubbard bought it. Hubbard was present at the store with Dudley the morning the boots were found missing. Both men

decided to travel to the next town, Presque Isle, to seek a warrant from the sheriff there to arrest Cullen for the crime. After the sheriff heard their story he decided to deputize Hubbard and send him with another deputy, Granville Hayden, to arrest Cullen.

The deputies set off to locate Cullen. They first went to the Cullen home. They were met at the door by the woman, Twist. She told the deputies Cullen had gone back to Canada. However, Hayden and Hubbard saw large footprints leading off in the direction of Swanback mill and camp where Cullen often worked. So they decided to try and find him there.

Hayden and Hubbard walked the six or seven miles in the snow to Swanback. By then it was late afternoon. At the camp they found Cullen. He was there with Swanback and another person by the name of Bird. The deputies told Cullen he was under arrest. But it was late and the deputies did not want to make the difficult journey back that night. So they decided to spend the night and bring Cullen in the next day. Cullen did not put up a fight. Secretly, the deputies hoped he would just escape them and flee back to Canada never to return. After all, stealing boots was not considered a major offense. They just wanted him gone.

All five men went to bed that night. In the early morning hours Swanback was awakened by some noise and saw Cullen standing over the bloody bodies of Hayden and Hubbard. Cullen had an axe in his hands. He had buried the axe into their skulls and killed them. Swanback was horrified. He was fearful for his life and ran out the door as fast as he could. Bird woke up moments later to the gruesome sight but could not leave because Cullen was blocking the door. Bird pleaded for his life. Cullen made him swear never to tell anyone what happened. Bird agreed. A short time later, Bird found his chance and managed to escape.

Bird and Swanback met outside a short distance away from the camp. Both men were in their bare feet standing in the cold

snow. They talked about what they should do. They saw Cullen exit the cabin, grab a pile of firewood, and walk back in. It did not occur to Bird and Swanback at the time but later they would find out with the rest of the townsfolk Cullen was preparing to burn the bodies in the fireplace. Bird and Swanback, barefoot and barely clothed, ran back through the ice and snow as fast as they could to report the murders, fearful that Cullen would catch up and murder them as well. They arrived back at Ball's Mill with frostbitten feet to tell the villagers about the grisly and brutal murders of deputies Hayden and Hubbard.

Word spread quickly as it does in small communities, around Ball's Mill as well as Presque Isle, the next town to the east where Hayden had lived. Hayden's brother, Cyrus, learned about his brother's murder right away. Angered and saddened by the news, he prepared a team of horses to get his brother's body, not knowing that both Hayden and Hubbard's bodies had been burned by Cullen. Cyrus acquired a coffin from a local proprietor to bring back his brother's remains.

In Ball's Mill, a group of men formed in the downtown area to talk about what should be done. There was a sheriff, a deputy, and a constable in the group. It was decided that an armed posse would go with the sheriff to search out Cullen and bring him to justice. They would first search Cullen's home that he shared with the lady Twist and her child. Once found, the posse would turn him over to the sheriff who would take charge of placing him under arrest.

So the men immediately proceeded to the Twist home. When they arrived, they noticed some fresh footprints that were no doubt made by a big man – a man the size of Jim Cullen. They knew right away he had to be there. The men forced their way through the door without knocking. They demanded from the lady Twist that Cullen come out. She repeatedly denied he was there saying that he went back to Canada. As they searched the home, one of the men tripped

over a large ring hooked to a trap door. Under the trap door was a dark cellar where they found Cullen hiding.

The men ordered him out of the cellar and the home at gun point. A deputy handcuffed the struggling Cullen. They searched for anything which might belong to Hayden or Hubbard. One of the men in the posse found a jackknife belonging to one of the murdered deputies in the possession of Twist's child. The posse knew at that very moment they had solid evidence of Cullen's guilt.

The angry mob led Cullen to the center of town where they handcuffed him to a post and questioned him. At about the same time, Hayden arrived with his wagon and coffin on his way to get his brother's remains. He stopped to see what was going on. He saw many men pointing rifles in Cullen's direction. They demanded to know what had happened at the Swanback camp. Cullen admitted axing the two men to death while they slept. He did not show any remorse and said he only regretted not killing Bird and Swanback in the process. He told them they wouldn't find the bodies because he had burned them.

After hearing this, Hayden realized the coffin he brought would not be needed. He decided to ride out to the location at Swanback and look through the ashes. When he arrived, he poked around in the rubble and found some objects belonging to his brother. He brought these items back into town and showed them to everyone, including Cullen. But Cullen continued to show no signs of remorse. Some of the posse tried to physically attack him during the questioning but were withheld by others in the group.

By this time it was almost dark and the sheriff in the group sent most of the men away. He said he would take Cullen to the nearest jail which was located in Presque Isle some eight or nine miles away. The sheriff put Cullen in the wagon Hayden had brought with the coffin. A small group of men sat with Cullen in the wagon as they made their way eastward to

Presque Isle. The journey by horse and wagon would not take long.

Meanwhile, in Presque Isle another group of men was forming. They had learned about the murders of Hayden and Hubbard and were planning to take matters into their own hands. This new group – about 100 vigilantes – donned masks and hoods, and vowed an oath of allegiance to each other to never reveal the identity of anyone in their group. They would take matters into their own hands and bring Cullen to justice on their terms. They crafted a noose which would be used to hang Big Jim from the nearest tree. Then the vigilantes began their journey to Ball's Mill.

As they were traveling westward, the sheriff and his posse were traveling in the exact opposite direction with Cullen secured in the wagon. At some point the two groups would meet in the dark. The wagon carrying Cullen traveled about a mile, cresting the first of several hills before they met the vigilantes who greatly outnumbered the sheriff's men.

The masked men demanded the sheriff release Cullen to them. When he refused, they surrounded the wagon anyway and grabbed Cullen, yanking him from the wagon, and, in the process, ripping up the floorboards with the shackles, and dragged him to a nearby tree where they threw the rope over a sturdy branch and hanged him.

After several minutes of swinging, they laid his body on the ground. A member of the sheriff's men who was a doctor checked for a pulse and determined Cullen was still alive. So the masked group put him back into the tree and continued to hang him until no pulse could be found.

When it was confirmed without a doubt he was dead, the vigilantes left. The sheriff placed Cullen's body into the coffin meant for the murdered deputy Hayden and brought him to Presque Isle. It laid there in the coffin the rest of the night.

The next day the townspeople lined up by the hundreds to view the body. This was big news for such a small town – the

worst murder that ever occurred in their history, or any of the surrounding communities for that matter. They all considered Cullen an evil man who deserved exactly what he got.

After the viewing, several volunteers took Cullen's body a few miles out of town and buried his remains near the village dumpsite in the same box meant for Hayden. There was no ceremony, no last rites or other words spoken over his remains – just a simple burial of the murderer in a secluded and unmarked grave.

But Cullen's body would not rest for long. Later that year a college professor named Bateman was seeking information about Cullen so he could confiscate the skull. Batemen had many skulls in his possession from known evildoers around the country. He studied and lectured about them and wanted Cullen's skull as a part of his collection. Bateman arranged payment with two local villagers who had knowledge of the grave's location and who agreed to take him there.

Then late one night the three men secretly set off to unearth the body. The men brought several tools with them to assist in the digging and the decapitation. They found the gravesite by kerosene light. A short time later the men pulled the coffin out of the ground and opened it. They were appalled at the sight of Cullen's rotting corpse. One of the hired men became light headed, turning white as a sheet, and feeling as if he would vomit.

The professor didn't have any trouble with the sight or the smell as he had done this many times in the past. He asked which of the two men wanted to remove the skull from the body. Neither one volunteered. The professor offered the men some spirits to drink that he called, "courage." After several swigs of "courage" the men found the strength to use their saws and remove the skull from the body. The rest of the remains were placed back into the box and returned to the ground. Then the professor built a fire and boiled some water in a large vat. He placed the skull into the boiling water and, a

short time later, the rotting flesh began to fall off the bone. Later the men returned to town with the professor's new addition to his collection.

After a short stay in Presque Isle, Bateman left the area with the skull to travel and lecture the countryside. This was a time in history when science was trying to explain what caused the evil in men. He talked about how the shape and the size of Cullen's skull contributed to his criminal behavior.

But this story does not end here. Swanback's camp, the location of the grisly double murders, was about to make news again for another murder. As the story goes, Swanback returned to the burned site of his camp and rebuilt his home. A short time later, a man named Hanson traveled from Canada and built a home next to him. Over the next few years, Swanback and Hanson began feuding over the property lines and a fence Hanson built which blocked Swanback from easy access to his own home.

One day Swanback and Hanson were arguing heatedly with each other, guns in hand. At the height of their anger, the men raised their guns and simultaneously shot each other. Hanson was shot dead and Swanback wounded. Swanback was later convicted and only spent a short time in jail. His actions were considered self defense.

Because of the separate murders that took place on the same property, the town's people began calling the infamous location "Bloody Half-Acre" which continues to this day.

DEVIL'S ELBOW

In the summer of 1976 I was 14 years old. I had spent many weekends camping with the Scouts over the past three years. But now I was preparing for a weeklong canoe trip on the Aroostook River in a very remote part of northwestern Maine. The river begins at the mouth of the Munsungan and Millinocket and ends 121 miles later at the St. John River where it continues flowing until it dumps into the Atlantic Ocean. For the most part, the Aroostook is a slow moving river, shallow and calm, meandering its way along quiet remote areas of forest and wildlife. I remember preparing for that trip with twenty or so other Scouts. Little did I know this would be one of the most hair-raising experiences of my young impressionable life. This is what happened...

“Boys, we will need to safely navigate the Devil’s Elbow if we are going to be successful in our 50 mile canoe trip next week,” said Scout Leader Ruel.

I sat on the floor cross-legged with my Scout troop listening attentively to Leader Ruel talk about the legendary Devil’s Elbow and what we had in store for us during our trip. Ruel was easily in his late sixties, walking with a bit of a limp, and needing a cane to lean on much of the time as he stood and spoke. He wore a wide brimmed hat decorated with a variety of fish hooks, decorative pins, and other small memorabilia.

“We can expect to be there on our first day sometime in the late afternoon,” he said. “I can’t tell you boys enough how careful we need to be around that spot. The Elbow has caused death and destruction to so many people over the years. I know for a fact because it almost got me one time.”

I suddenly felt in awe of this man for having cheated death and lived to grace our presence with his story.

Ruel continued. “It got its name by being evil and wicked. It does *NOT* respect human life. However, if we are all prepared – and I truly believe we are – we will safely steer around the Elbow and survive. I know you are all brave Scouts. I have faith in your abilities. I have seen you training and preparing for this trip. I am confident that you can meet this challenge.”

As I sat there glued to his words, I suddenly felt uneasy, worrying about the possibilities. Would I survive the Devil's Elbow? Would I crash my boat and meet some dark and sinister fate at this location? Would my friends find my mangled body in the water? I tried to convince myself that it wouldn't be – *couldn't be* – all that bad. But in my mind I kept picturing my death scene over and over again.

I tried to lighten the seriousness with some humor.

"Oh, no, we're all going to die!" I joked to my brother Larry who was sitting next to me.

I am sure Leader Ruel heard my comment, but chose to ignore it. He continued to speak in a serious tone as he described the Elbow and how we would circumnavigate it.

"When we get close to it you will start to feel the waters pulling faster and faster," he explained. "You'll have less control of your boats. You will not see the Elbow right away, but believe me, it will see you. After passing some dense brush and trees it will be right there, beckoning you to come hither, as it tries to smash your boat into tiny pieces."

My humor suddenly turned to solemnity as I realized this was serious business indeed. Leader Ruel continued to describe the monster we would be facing very soon.

"The massive rock is a sharp outcropping about 10 feet high and twice as wide. It will be on your left, or to the west. It juts out at an angle from the shoreline, facing you with its sharp razor edge. If you miss it – and believe me, I hope you all do – you are still not in the clear. Many a boat has missed the side of the rock only to be swept around by the current to the opposite side to become impaled on the sharp tip sticking out like the head of a unicorn."

I thought about his words, picturing my body flattened upon the rock, my arms and legs splayed out in a bloody mess like some splattered bug on my dad's windshield. Or, maybe I would be lucky to miss the side of the rock only to be impaled

seconds later by the rock's backside as my boat floated lazily down the river empty.

Leader Ruel had made this trip many times in the past and was considered by the locals as an expert in traveling the remote waterway. As long as we heeded his advice, and did what he said, we should be safe.

"The river forms a giant 'S' pattern around the rock," he said. "First it turns sharply to the left toward the base of the rock, waves crashing and swirling around violently before swinging sharply to the right with lightning force. Then it completes the 'S' when it swings back to the left again around the backside of the rock with massive force. The best way to get around this rock safely is for each boat to navigate to the far right or outside edge of this pattern. The stream will be much slower there making it a lot easier to steer away from the dangerous protrusion."

The plan would be that each canoe would have one adult leader and one boy. While one boat was negotiating the rough waters a second boat would be waiting on standby for the "all clear" signal. It would be too dangerous to send boats continuously if some were tangled up in the waters. After all the boats had cleared the rock, we would find a good location to pull over and make camp for the night.

So, after our final instructions, I went home to pack my bags over the next several days. I checked and double checked my camping list. It seemed to me that everything was in order.

As the day approached I kept thinking about the Elbow. This could be the greatest adventure of my life, or the most devastating. Would I live to see my Eagle Scout badge?

Eventually the day came and we loaded our gear into the back of a pickup and made our way into the great northern Maine woods. We drove for many miles, sometimes following segments of the Aroostook River where we would be canoeing, going further and further into the vast forest, away from any sign of civilization.

After a few hours we made it to the mouth of the Munsungan and Millinocket Rivers. We fished for much of the morning. It was a beautiful sunny day and the trout and black flies were both biting rather nicely. I made sure I lathered myself up good with the homemade bug lotion our local pharmacist concocted by the gallons for our trip.

As I was watched my line, I noticed there were no sounds of cars, planes, or motor boats. I heard only the occasional sounds of the other scouts talking and joking, the wind whooshing through the trees from time to time, the cawing of a crow, the pecking of a distant woodpecker, and the gentle slapping of the river water against my legs as I stood in it knee deep. I caught my share of brookies that day – more than anyone else – which I kept, and a few undersized salmon which I promptly threw back in. I couldn't help thinking how lucky I was today. Certainly this wonderful day would not end for me in tragedy at the Devil's Elbow.

After a successful morning of fishing, we lined up in our boats full of gear and freshly caught fish, and began our journey downstream. I would be riding in the sixth position with an adult leader named "Pete." When other leaders preferred that we called them by their last name – like Mr. Turner or Mr. Barnes – Pete was okay with us just calling him plain old "Pete." I rode up ahead in the bow of the boat as Pete took his position in the stern.

"Your job is to watch for rocks that are just below the surface," he told me. "Use the skills you learned at camp last summer to move the bow left or right with your paddle. I'll do the rest back here."

"Okay," I promised. "I got it."

The boats were all spaced about 50 to 60 feet apart so we wouldn't ram each other in the current. As we moved along in single file I was careful not to get too close to the boat in front of me, back paddling whenever necessary to keep our distance. The river's slow moving current did most of the

work as I steered the bow around rocks and fallen trees. I could hear some Scouts ahead singing songs and telling jokes. “Row Row Row Your Boat” seemed to be the favorite of the afternoon. The river meandered slowly through the forest in twists and turns, heading northward to our final destination.

By mid afternoon I heard some boys up ahead yell “moose!”

As Pete and I rounded the bend I was surprised to see a full grown bull moose with its head in the water. It was drinking and lazing in the stream trying to cool his body from the hot July sun. The singing and other noises didn’t seem to scare him a bit. He just lifted his head out of the water for a moment and stared at us indifferently as we floated by. His legs and lower trunk were submerged under water with only his curved back and head being noticeable like a funny looking black island. Water was dripping from its large snout. On his head were large curved tines flattened and separated in a fork-like manner. I remembered hearing one time that the Indians called moose horns the “devil’s antlers.”

He’s probably thinking: those stupid idiots. They’ll never make it through the Elbow. Pity them.

After a moment, the moose dunked his head back under the water to drink or look for food.

I knew I would see many wild animals on this trip. By far, the moose was going to be the biggest animal at more than seven or eight hundred pounds. If we were lucky we would also see black bear, deer, wolves, bobcats, and coyotes, as well as smaller mammals and reptiles.

I knew most animals in the Maine woods feared human beings. They would never attack a person unless they were provoked. But what if they waited for victims at the Elbow? I pictured wild animals hiding behind bushes, waiting patiently for the next victim to smash onto the rock so they could have their next tasty meal. I really didn’t feel like being eaten by a bear or wolf today. If I were dead it would be one thing, but

what if I were only hurt and the animals started chewing on me. Now that might be a problem.

“Hey Pete,” I asked, “Are we going to have any trouble making it around that Devil’s Elbow?”

“Are you worried about it?” he asked.

“Of course not,” I lied.

The leaders always tried to find your weak spots. Sometimes they tested your courage by exaggerating the risk level and then saying something like, “Now it’s time to separate the boys from the men,” or asking, “Are you men or mice?” Like the time we were in Bristol, Canada, for the Polar Bear Camporee and we had to sleep in snow shelters we made ourselves. The temperature dropped to ten below without the wind chill factor being figure in. The leaders told us we could tough it out by sleeping in our manmade shelters or we could join the Girl Scouts and stay in the warm cabin nearby.

“I’m in control of this boat,” I stated confidently. “I’ve got my canoeing merit badge, you know. This river ain’t no match for me, no sir-ee. I’ll show that rock a thing or two. Shucks, it’s probably just a little pebble anyway.”

“Okay, if you say so,” Pete replied, chuckling under his breath.

A few quiet seconds went by.

“You know, Philip, I’m counting on you to take us around the Elbow safely because I never did get my merit badge when I was your age. In fact, I’m feeling a little sleepy so maybe I’ll take a nap while you take us around the little pebble,” he joked.

I looked back at him as he pretended to sleep. He had a little smirk on the corner of his lips. I didn’t say anything, but turned around and continue paddling.

So, on we went for most of the afternoon, hearing only our voices, and the sounds of nature.

At about 4 p.m., the waters began to quicken. At the same time the skies darkened and the air cooled noticeably. An

ominous black cloud pushed its way towards us threatening rain. I could feel the change in my bones and shivered for more than one reason. I knew we had to be close to the Elbow. A short time later I heard a shout from someone ahead: “Devil’s Elbow!”

Pete and I quickly paddled to the shoreline where we grabbed a branch and hung on while we waited for the signal to go forward around the rock. I knew it was very close – just around a bend or two. I couldn’t tell what was happening with the other boats. I knew each boat was lined up waiting its turn like we were. I desperately wished I could see it.

Several minutes went by.

Someone yelled, “Okay, boat number two go through.”

I waited and listened. Finally, a few minutes later I heard, “Okay, boat number three – you’re next.”

Then, several more minutes later: “Okay, boat four, you’re clear to go.”

So far, so good I thought. *This can’t be too bad. One more boat to go and it would be my turn.*

“Okay, boat five, you’re clear to go,” one of the leaders ahead yelled in our direction.

We waited a few minutes.

No sound.

Several more minutes went by.

What was the hold up? I wondered, impatiently. *Was there something wrong?*

All I could think about was getting this over with. The waiting was killing me. Then I heard the leader say, “Boat five capsized. They are okay. Just a little shook up. Boat six, you may proceed now.”

Capsized? I thought, horrified. *Oh no. Isn’t capsizing a bad thing? Doesn’t that mean the Elbow got them?*

I was thankful to hear no one was hurt. I hoped the worst was not yet to come.

We pushed off from the shoreline. The current quickly pulled us around the trees which were blocking our view of the Elbow. As we rounded the bend, I quickly saw one Scout some distance away dangling in the water on the right shoreline, his arm above his head holding onto a low branch like a drowning rat clinging on for dear life. I couldn't see his partner anywhere, but I did notice hats, bags, coolers, and backpacks floating in the water.

Oh no, this is NOT going to be good.

Then the massive rock appeared out of nowhere on our left, like a menacing stone creature – the stone face of death – ready to crush us and send us floating on down the water to be picked up but not repaired. At the base of the rock was a frothy pool of white water where the water was churning in violent circles making soapy suds and spiraling funnels. I felt mesmerized by the danger. After hearing those awesome stories about the rock for some time now, I was finally here, face to face, with the killer of unwary river travelers. Now it was time to pay the piper.

“Hard right! Hard right!” shouted Pete loudly over the increasing violent noise of the waves hitting our boat. I broke from my momentary stupor and tried to focus again. Something in his voice sounded frantic. I dug my paddle into the water on my left using the push-away stroke I had learned at camp, hoping the boat would go hard right as Pete had directed. I pushed as hard as I could outward to point the front of the boat away from the rock. I could hear Pete digging in as well.

Krrrrr-splash, krrrr-splash, krrrr-splash.

Over and over again our paddles desperately dug the water to free ourselves from the grip of the current which kept pulling us in. It seemed with ever stroke we fell further and further behind, making no headway at all.

Despite the danger, I was in awe of the Elbow. This was no pebble indeed. It was *HUGE* and it was coming straight for us.

Pete chanted, "Stroke, stroke, stroke."

By now, the rain was coming down in buckets. If we had been on any other part of the river we could have pulled over and put on our rain gear. But this storm came on way too suddenly, leaving no other choice but to continue through in the downpour.

This was going to be impossible, I thought desperately. How are we going to miss that...that thing?

One hundred feet. Eighty feet. Sixty feet.

It wouldn't be long now. As we neared it, I could see an odd reddish tint to the surface of the Elbow.

Is that victim's blood I see all over the rock? I wondered incredulously.

I was sure that over the years many paddlers had survived the danger only to lose a limb, or become permanently brain damaged by the impact.

Fifty feet. Forty feet. Thirty feet.

The massive structure loomed over us ominously. The rest of the landscape was only secondary to this freak of nature. But, despite its overpowering presence, I still managed to see in the corner of my eye an overturned boat bobbing around in the water nearby.

Oh, no, I thought. Am I next?

Twenty feet. Fifteen feet. Ten feet. Five.

My canoe was caught in the vicious waters and totally out of my control. Somehow, despite my futile attempts, it still managed to get caught correctly in the current just enough to whip itself around the face of the rock, but coming *dangerously* close to it in the process. I could feel my furious paddle striking the hard granite surface just inches below the water.

Splash-thud, splash-thud, splash-thud.

Over and over my paddle broke the water as our boat whipped itself around and away from the rock. Waves crashed against the canoe and into our faces. We quickly changed our

strokes, making sure not to paddle on the same side or else be swamped and thrown against the rock.

I began drawing my paddle on the right as my partner drew on the left trying to get us away from the dreaded Elbow. Fortunately, our boat caught the wave in just the right manner as it slung itself forward around the giant “S” pattern and the dangerous backside with ease.

Out of breath, heart racing, and feeling exhilarated, I knew we had really accomplished something here. We had made it, alive, and unharmed.

“Philip, we did it,” beamed Pete exuberantly. “We made it around. Hot dog!”

Pete often used the phrase “hot dog” when he was really excited about something.

“Let’s pull over to the bank and wait for the others,” he said.

As we were pulling our boat to shore, Pete yelled back upstream to the others, “All clear for boat number 7.”

We celebrated our success in the pouring rain while waiting for the other boats to get through the Elbow. I looked up at the dark sky. Thunder rumbled in the distance and lightning flashes suddenly filled the air.

CRASH!

The lighting bolt struck something with ungodly force. It lit up the densely layered storm clouds and illuminated the river in front of us like a highway.

The Devil must be angry I made it around his Elbow I thought. Was he planning on killing me now with a painful lightning bolt?

As we waited for the rest of the boats to make it around the Elbow, I watched as some of the older Scouts and leaders from the first few boats were helping the swamped Scouts retrieve their wayward gear. The rain continued to pour down steadily with the occasional sound of thunder and lightning. In

no time, our Troop's eleven boats had cleared the dangerous Elbow.

It was late in the afternoon and we pulled the boats completely on shore to make camp for the night just a short distance away from the Elbow. We picked a spot for our main camp and began to gather firewood. Once we had our campfire going nicely, we brought out our tents and began to pitch them. I would be sharing a tent with my friend Mark tonight. As usual, we looked for a spot farthest away from everyone else. We liked to assert our independence to impress the other scouts and leaders.

As we pitched our tent, I suddenly noticed we were the closest ones to the backside of the Elbow.

This is a mistake, I thought as I hammered in my first tent stake. We were planning to sleep right behind the Elbow in the Devil's backyard.

I didn't dare say anything to Mark for fear he would think I was a wimp. I tried to convince myself this would be fine. No problem, really, just my imagination. There wasn't anything sinister or evil about this spot at all.

We got the tent set up and changed out of our wet clothing. The rain continued to pour, but we were now dry and feeling a whole lot better under our rain gear. I helped some of the older boys under a large canopy prepare food for our evening meal. After dinner, we stoked up our campfire until it burned brightly. Nightfall was now upon us.

As we sat around the campfire, we talked about how brave we were to make it around the Devil's Elbow. Then we told ghost stories, monster tales, and things-that-go-bump-in-the-night stories about the Maine woods. The rain began to subside, but there were still dark menacing clouds looming above us. The flickering flames of our campfire sent a glow of light which radiated the darkness and helped us feel a bit more at ease. The flashes of golden firelight seemed to bounce off the trees making them come alive and dance for us.

By 9:00 p.m. we were ready for bed. We would be getting up at the crack of dawn to complete the next leg of our long journey.

Mark and I walked over to our tent some distance away. I could just see the tall dark shadow of the Elbow on my left as it watched us. I shivered and felt the goosebumps rise immediately on both arms. I tried to ignore it as we both hopped out of our rain gear and settled into our sleeping bags for the night.

“Goodnight, sleep tight, don’t let the bed bugs bite,” joked Mark.

It wasn’t worried about the bed bugs.

“Sure thing,” I replied. I wondered if he could sense the hesitancy in my voice.

I could hear the rain playing its rat-a-tat-tat song on the sides of the tent as it started to come down again. The wind had picked up some causing our tent to shake and shudder. Before long, I drifted off to sleep tired from the day’s hard work.

Sometime in the middle of the night I awoke. It took me several minutes to shake myself out of sleep and into alert mode.

Did something wake me up? I wondered groggily.

I knew that I was camping on the Aroostook River with the Scouts after having survived the Devil’s Elbow. Unfortunately, I remembered we had pitched our tent near the hideous formation. But, fortunately, I knew I was not alone in the wilderness and the dark shape next to me in the sleeping bag was my good friend Mark.

But something wasn’t right. I could feel it. Something was wrong here and I couldn’t quite put my finger on it. What was it? Something about the...

Then it hit me. It was the sound of...

...nothing.

Absolutely nothing.

It was totally silent. There was no sound of rain pitter-pattering on the tent, no wind howling, no thunder noises, no lightning bolts flashing, no coyotes howling, no frogs croaking or insects buzzing, and no sounds of rustling tree branches. In fact, there were no sounds of *ANYTHING* out there. It was *DEAD* quiet.

Complete silence in the northern Maine woods is not normal. As far as I was concerned, it was quite disturbing, and a sure sign of a satanic presence in the area.

My body responded to the dread by making some drastic adjustments. My body temperature was rising. I could feel a slight itching as perspiration began to form under my hairline. Goosebumps raked my arms and caused my hair to stand straight up as if some fiendish ghoul was pulling on them with an evil magnet. I felt a contradictory chill as my body turned both hot and cold. I pulled the sleeping bag around me tighter. In its confusion, my whole body was shivering and sweating at the same time.

"Mark, wake up," I whispered toward the dark silhouette next to me.

No answer.

"Mark, wake up," I whispered a little louder.

Still no response.

"Mark, wake up," I said louder still.

Mark did not budge.

I slowly pulled my hand out of the sleeping bag and reached over to shake him.

"Mark, wake up," I said as I shook the form next to me.

No response.

I shook harder.

Still no response.

"Mark!" I nearly screamed as I shook him one more time.

No noise or response came from him.

What happened to Mark? I wondered. Is he.....dead? Oh, no, this wasn't Mark at all. It was actually some creature that

took Mark out of his sleeping bag, ate him, and then crawled back in to take his place.

The Devil's Elbow had something to do with this I was sure of it. We had violated the home of the Devil himself and he was about to unleash his forces. I couldn't close my eyes. I kept listening, waiting, watching, and hoping some Devine being would intervene and save me. I said a short prayer, one I had been using for years when I found myself in tight spots: Lord, please forgive me of all my sins. I promise to do better, I swear. Just get me through this one night alive. Amen. Even if I died tonight, I would be sure to get into heaven.

Then all hell broke loose.

Out of nowhere came a rumbling sound like a freight train on a track, coming closer and closer. Thunder crashed over and over again. Seconds later there was a huge blast of lightning that fully lit up the tent. It was at that moment when I saw the most horrific thing. On the side of the tent facing the river I watched a sinister black shape flash on and off with the lightning.

I tensed up.

What was that? I wondered in shocked disbelief. *How could this be happening to me after all the good things I have done in my life?*

I could barely breathe. I couldn't take my eyes off the tent. Soon there was another lighting flash, a bright one, this time remaining a little longer than the first. There it was again, the tall grotesque shape, perfectly silhouetted on the tent, but this time it was in a different location, as if it was walking around the tent. It was ghastly, deformed, and gruesome; an evil creature searching for something. In one hand it held an object – a spear or sword perhaps. On the creature's head were two thin pointy objects.

Horns I thought. *Sharp, deadly horns. I am going to die at the hands of the Devil creature that dwells in the home directly behind the rock.*

My vocal chords were frozen. My body temperature was rising. I stared at the side of the tent in disbelief. At any moment now the creature would be using its spear to cut a hole into the side of the tent to impale me.

Rain started to come down harder now. Lightning flashed again and another black hideous shape appeared on the side of the tent. I cowered deeper in my sleeping bag, not wanting to cover my eyes and be completely taken by surprise when the creature entered the tent.

Then it was gone again with the lightning. I couldn't move or make a sound. I was paralyzed with fear.

Soon another flash, but this time I did not see a shape. Where did it go? Was it gone? It had disappeared; at least for the moment. Was it going to leave me alone now? Did my prayer finally get answered?

I listened and watched. I could hear the rumbling in the clouds as it prepared to send another lightning bolt to the ground. Maybe the last one hit the creature and killed it. I least I hoped that was the case.

As the rumbling continued, so did more lighting. I looked for the dark form on the river side of the tent, but could not find it. I turned my head.

There it was, at the entrance to the tent, about to come in.

That's when I fainted.

Somewhere in a deep cavern of my mind I could hear a voice calling me. It started as a faint, distant noise, but soon neared, pulling me into wakefulness.

"Philip, its time to get up," Mark said. "Wake up, wake up, wake up. Stop being such a sleepy head."

I stirred from my coma. As my eyes fluttered open, I could just see Mark getting dressed in the morning light which filled the tent. I could hear birds chirping a sunrise reveille. There were rustling sounds of the other Scouts and leaders who were already up and about. I could hear the steady humming of the river as it passed close by.

“Huh?” I replied.

“It’s time to get up, ya bum. You want breakfast or not?”

I was alive. Yes, it was true. I was alive. But how was that possible? How did I escape the wrath of the devil-creature-man-thing, or whatever the hell it was?

I didn’t care at this point if Mark thought I was a wimp. I was going to tell him anyway.

“Mark,” I blurted out. “The weirdest thing happened last night. I couldn’t wake you up. I mean, I tried to, but you wouldn’t get up. I shook you and everything. I thought you were dead. There was this awful creature outside our tent last night. It was big – real big – and had horns. Oh, and it was carrying a spear.”

Mark smiled, and then burst out laughing.

“Now, hold on there Philip, slow down. You were just dreaming. You were having a bad dream.”

I thought about this for a moment as I lay there in my sleeping bag.

A dream? I considered. *It couldn’t be. I would not convince myself otherwise.*

“But it seemed so real,” I said. “Mark, it was outside our tent last night, I swear on a stack of Bibles. It was some kind of Devil-thing on the loose or something. It was walking around outside our tent. I could see the shape. It had horns on its head and a spear in its hands. I thought you were dead.”

“Philip, you were dreaming,” Mark said again while belting out another hearty laugh.

I left it at that. Okay, maybe it was all a bad dream. Or, maybe it was just a tree shadow on the side of the tent that looked like a Devil.

I got dressed and followed Mark outside. Suddenly, he stopped. I bumped squarely into him like he was a brick wall.

“Hey, what the...what’s wrong? Mark? Mark?”

Mark pointed to the ground near our tent, his hand shaking. I looked down. There in the damp grassy area around our tent were cloven hoof prints.

I knew right away it had been the Devil I had seen outside the tent the night before, because he always walks on cloven hooves...

SON OF PAMOLA, GOD/BEAST

There are many stories about Pamola (native word for “curse of the mountain”) the great God/Beast of Katahdin that have been told over the years. He is referred to by the Penobscot Indians as the “Angry God” of Thunder. Katahdin is the Wabanaki word for “greatest mountain.” It is located in mid-Maine and reaches a height of 5,267 feet. It is the northern terminus of the 2,160-mile long Appalachian Trail. Thoreau climbed it in 1846 and remarked in The Maine Woods, that it was “the most treacherous and porous country I ever traveled.” The Son of Pamola story is one of many legendary tales of the mountain and happens to be my favorite.

Once upon a time there was a very lonely Indian girl who lived at the base of Mount Katahdin. She often played by herself in the woods along the rivers and streams. She enjoyed picking berries and fruit. As she grew up, she admired the mountain where she lived. She heard stories from her tribe about the God/Beast who lived in the upper regions of the mountain. They called him Pamola, the “curse of the mountain.” He was the God of Thunder who ruled the top of the mountain, keeping it shrouded in fog. The Elders told her the story about how he would wreak havoc on travelers, causing snow, ice, and wind to confuse them and lead them off the trails. The Natives say he has the head of a moose, the wing of an eagle, and the body of a man. Pamola is greatly feared by those who would pass by his home.

One day as the girl was picking blueberries at the base of the mountain near Chimney Pond, she stopped to drink from the water. She was amazed at how the pond was so crystal clear. She believed she that could touch the bottom with her hand, but when she tried, she failed. She grabbed a ten foot stick and poked it in, but she still could not touch the bottom.

Surely such pure water must have magical powers, she thought.

She knew the lovely oasis was formed from the natural springs underneath the mountain and from the heavenly rains that flowed down from above. She looked up from the water

to the majestic mountain which overlooked the pond. She admired the mountain's strength and awesomeness. She looked back down, cupped her hand in the water, and took a drink. As the water dribbled down her throat, she thought about how lonely she was and how she desired to wed someday. Suddenly, she looked at the mountain and said, "I wish Katahdin were a man and he would marry me." She felt the sacred waters of Katahdin fill her body and spread throughout her entire being.

Her desire overwhelmed her and she made her way up the mountain. No one ever saw her again for three long years until she came down the mountain with a baby boy. It was rumored that Pamola, the spirit of the mountain in human form, had invited her into his dark cavern, and wed her. When asked by the villagers, the girl refused to say who had actually sired her child. But, she could not hide the facts: the child had a large head, a wing instead of an arm, and eyes that penetrated like a knife.

The girl and her son made their home together at the base of Katahdin. Often the two would gather fruit, pick berries, and hunt game while others in the tribal members watched from a distance, and talked amongst themselves. As the boy grew older, they could see he had special powers. One time the boy was seen in a boat with his mother. He pointed to a flock of wild ducks and immediately the birds floated dead on the water. Another time he pointed to a moose and it fell dead to the ground with a loud "thud." All began to fear him and thought he was a mighty magician or sorcerer.

One day the boy and his mother were walking up the slopes of Katahdin picking blueberries along Cathedral Trail when they came across two hunters. It was obvious from their behavior the hunters had been drinking spirits. They refused to let the girl and her son pass by, standing in their way, and making threats with their guns. They were curious to see that the boy had one wing instead of an arm. One of the men

pointed the gun at the girl and told her the child would be coming with them. They figured the boy and his strange wing would fetch them a good payout in a freak show in some traveling circus. They told her if she didn't cooperate they would shoot her dead. The boy became very scared for his mother and pointed his finger at one man. The man immediately turned the rifle to his partner and shot him through the heart. Then the man took the rifle and shot himself in the head.

As the boy grew older he realized that he had special powers and only used them when absolutely necessary. His mother told him stories about his father which she said should never be told to anyone else. She explained how his father was the great God/Beast Pamola who had the head of a moose, the wing of an eagle, and the body of a man, who was cursed to rule the top of the great mountain. Pamola had great powers over nature. She told him how the angry Pamola had power over the weather, causing fog, snow, sleet, and hail to confuse travelers and protect the great mountain. She told him how Pamola had taken her into his lair to wed her and inseminate her with his child. He wanted a son to help rule his mountain. After the child was born, she expected him to have similar powers as Pamola. But, instead of controlling the weather, he was only able to control the behavior and actions of other living beings.

So the boy now understood the full meaning of his lone wing and special powers. Like his father, he had a strong sense of protection for the mountain, but he also found the need to use his powers for his own survival which he had done in the past. All he had to do was point his finger and he could stop a beating heart.

But the wing was an abnormality; an oddity that made him uncomfortable in public. He knew the strength he possessed with his gift and the importance of controlling its power. He made the wing lie flat against his side to conceal it under the

skins during the winter months. In the summertime, he tied a sash around his waist to hold his clothing and wing in place. He was not ashamed of his wing. He just wanted to look like the others as much as possible.

The boy soon discovered when he opened his wing very wide it gave him the keen sight of the eagle. His eyes soared over the land allowing him to look down with sharp eyes at the countryside below. He could see the field mouse from 1000 feet scurrying around in the grass, the brook trout jumping a mile away, and the bear climbing a distant tree. As long as his wing was extended, the boy's eyes became the vision of the soaring eagle.

His tribal family accepted his differences wholeheartedly. They believed he was endowed with a great spiritual power from the mighty Gods to help them overcome the wrath of the white man who was trying to ruin their land and mountain home. They would nurture him within the tribal community so he might, in turn, help guard their land and protect its people from outside threats.

One day the boy was walking through the forest near Katahdin when he heard the voices of men in the distance. Then he heard gun shots. Quickly, but with great caution, he approached the men to see what they were doing. They were hunting, which would not normally alarm the boy except for the kind of prey they were hunting: eagles. The men had shot and killed several of them, the sacred bird of the boy's people, and the symbol of their strength and unity. This greatly angered the boy. The eagle was like his brother. These men were not killing for food, but for sport.

The boy approached the men and demanded they give him the dead eagles and to never shoot another eagle again. The men laughed at him, showing no signs of being scared in the least bit, especially since the boy was unarmed. He did not present a danger to the men who outnumbered him threefold.

They refused to give up the dead eagles. One man said, "Go take a hike back to your teepee, Indian boy."

The boy said, "You have greatly angered the son of Pamola, God/Beast of the greatest mountain Katahdin. Are you prepared to feel his wrath?"

"Leave us alone," said a different man, laughing, "or else we'll put some buckshot in your backside."

The boy raised his wing. He would teach them a lesson. He wouldn't kill them but he would make sure that they would never be back to this mountainside again. When the boy raised his wing he saw other animals in the forest with his eagle eyes including the black bear over the next ridge.

The boy lowered his wing and pointed his finger into the trees beyond the men, standing silently; waiting. The men could not understand what he was doing. Seconds later a bear, weighing at least 700 lbs, came running out of the woods toward them. It ran so fast the men had no time to lift their rifles. It was suddenly upon them, knocking the first man down with one mighty swing of its claw. It sliced a claw down the man's horrified face. Next it chased the second man and knocked him face down, leaving a claw mark down his backside in the process. Finally, it chased the third man, knocking him down as well, and left a bloody claw print on the his buttocks.

When it was over, the bear stood up triumphantly, doing a little dance with his feet, and growling deeply. He shook his head left and right a few times, got back down on all fours, and took off into the forest. The men, howling and screaming in pain, got up and high-tailed it out of there in the opposite direction, never to be seen again.

The boy enjoyed having these magical powers. It made him feel strong and powerful. He felt he had some purpose in his life, just like his father, to be a guardian for this sacred land, and a protector of the great mountain.

One day when the boy was soaring above the land with his magic wing he saw a truck pull up along the river and stop. Two men got out and began dumping large barrels of something into the river. The boy feared the men were polluting the waters so he dropped his wing to his side and ran through the woods to find out. Within minutes he arrived at the river and, from a hidden spot, watched the men. The barrels they were dumping were marked with skulls and crossbones – poison!

The boy stepped forward and ordered the men stop what they were doing. The men told him to mind his own business. They did not feel threatened by him in any way as they carried pistols on their sides and saw that he carried none.

The boy said, “You have greatly angered the son of Pamola, God/Beast of the greatest mountain Katahdin. Are you prepared to feel his wrath?”

One man said, “Do you want to feel the sting of my pistol, Indian boy?”

So the boy raised his finger and pointed it at the men. He would not kill them, but he would teach them a lesson. He forced each man to walk to the river’s edge and jump in. The men floated away, screaming for help. They did not understand what had just happened. Something foreign was controlling their bodies. The boy followed along until all three men were pitched over the side of a thundering waterfall. The men pulled themselves out, banged up, bruised, and very confused, and made their way back to their vehicle, leaving the mountainside for good.

As the boy grew older he gained more understanding and respect for his great powers, but at the same time, he had a desire to learn more about his father who had similar abilities. He would often look up to the skyline and see his father’s torment in the form of black clouds and harsh weather. He thought about using his magic wing to fly atop the mountain

and search for his father, but he promised his mother he would not do so. He loved his mother and would not disrespect her.

But the boy was curious and asked her more questions, including why he could not see his father. She told him Pamola was forever cursed to live on top of the mountain and could never come down. When she lived with him, she became lonely for her people, but Pamola did not want her to leave for fear he would never see his son again. He threatened her with great harm if she ever tried to leave.

However, one day the woman found her chance. When Pamola was out of his lair and spreading his icy sleet on the mountainside she left with the boy. Pamola soon discovered they were leaving and tried to stop them by sending twisters and hail to block their path. She and the baby hid behind large rocks and crevices to avoid his torment. She moved quickly and carefully while trees and shrubs were being ripped out of the ground all around them. By the time they reached Chimney Pond, she knew they were safe.

So the boy accepted his life, knowing if he were to ever meet him his father, the God/Beast, he would surely be torn away from his mother forever.

One day the boy was fishing at Roaring Brook stream. He had been there most of the day and the fish were biting nicely so he didn't have to resort to his magical powers to catch any. He had about a dozen trout in his basket. He was so preoccupied with the peacefulness of waters and the sounds of nature and did not allow his mind to soar above the ground that day, for if he had, he would have seen a band of ruthless men sneaking up to his tribal village. They had guns and were planning on killing the Indians and stealing their pelts and jewelry. The men pounced on the unsuspecting tribe and began shooting. The Indians were no match for the men's rifles and many of them were killed.

The boy heard the gunshots in the distance and knew something was wrong. He lifted his wing and saw the

massacre. He ran as fast as he could along the river trail back to his tribe. He arrived to see several teepees engulfed in flames. There were bodies everywhere covered in blood. One of the men saw the boy and tried to shoot him, but the boy quickly raised his finger causing the man to shoot himself. Another man ran toward him with a torch in his hand. The boy pointed his finger and the man thrust the burning object against his own body. The man screamed and fell to the ground, thrashing, and trying to extinguish the flames. Minutes later, he lay dead.

The boy frantically searched for his mother. As he looked, a man came out of a teepee with an armload of furs. The boy pointed his finger and the man immediately began to choke. He dropped the furs, grabbed his throat, and started clawing his neck, trying to open his clogged airway. Within a minute, he fell dead to the ground.

Behind the boy there was a gunshot. The bullet struck him in the arm, causing him to fall to the ground in pain. He looked to see the man pointing the gun at him and preparing for a second shot. The boy lifted his wounded arm and pointed his finger. The man's heart stopped beating and he fell dead.

The boy got up holding his arm and called out his mother's name over and over again. He began looking for her. Just beyond the village he found her body. It was obvious from her wound she had tried to escape the men and was shot in the back. Greatly saddened, he knelt by her side, crying many tears over her body. He pointed his finger to revive her, but as he feared, he had no powers over the non-living.

The boy stood up and spread his wing. He saw many members of his village scattered about the countryside who had escaped the bloody carnage. He gathered them up, telling them he had killed all the savage men, and they needn't worry now. So they all returned and began preparing for their customary "Dance for the Dead" ceremony to send their kindred spirits off in flames to better hunting grounds.

After his mother was killed, the boy spent many days thinking about his purpose and special powers. He felt extremely sad he was unable to save his mother and many of his Native people. If only he had been more watchful and vigilant she and the others would still be alive.

As the years went by the boy grew into manhood. He remembered what his mother had told him about never going to the top of the mountain for fear the God/Beast Pamola would not let him return. He greatly wanted to see his father and get to know him. Now that his mother was dead, he decided to make the trip up Katahdin to find his father.

The boy hiked the trail along Roaring Brook up the mountainside for about three miles until he came to Chimney Pond. He had been there several times before, but had never gone any higher. Like his mother, he drank from the Pond and felt the cool pure waters fill his stomach and his whole sense of being. He felt as one with the mountain.

After he was satiated and full of spirit, he began to ascend the mountain. After several hours of climbing through the dense trees, he emerged to the sight of huge rocks and boulders which slowed his travels considerably. He climbed the first and second cathedrals until he reached the mile high summit. He used his wing to help search for Pamola's cave. However, he could not find it. The mountain air was clear. No fog enshrouded the summit. It was as if Pamola was inviting the boy to find him. The boy traveled along the mountain, crossing the knife's edge from the apex looking for signs of his father's home.

It was close to dusk and the boy slept in a crevice between two large boulders. He had dreams of his father that night imagining him to be an angry beast with fiery eyes and sharp talons. In his dream, his father was angry with him for not coming to see him sooner. He grabbed the boy and was about to throw him off the mountainside when the boy woke up.

The son of Pamola began to search for his father again. As he walked he heard the roar of the wind calling him to follow. It seemed to beckon him toward a narrow ridge. He followed it, walking for several hours before coming to a very well hidden cave behind some tangled vines and brush.

Just then Pamola, the great God/Beast, emerged from his cave. He was just as his mother had described, having the wing of an eagle, the head of a moose, and the body of a man. Pamola had sensed his son was on the mountaintop. He had purposefully restrained himself from causing harsh weather. He was happy to see his son and gave him food and water. Pamola told him about his curse of never being able to leave the mountaintop as well as his power over the weather. The boy told his father about his own special powers over the living and how he could soar above the land with his eagle vision whenever he lifted his wing. Sadly, the boy described how his mother had recently come to her death.

Pamola nodded his understanding and said, “We are both cursed, my son, to protect the mountain and all its glory.”

So from that day forth, the boy and his father carried out their anger together – Pamola from the top of the mountain and the son from the bottom.

So beware all you travelers with ill intent. While you are on Katahdin you might find yourself in a violent hailstorm, blinding snowstorm, or be looking at a one-winged man pointing a finger in your direction.

ALIEN ABDUCTION IN ALLAGASH

This event happened in 1976. The abduction was reported in my local newspaper. I updated the story with information about what happened to the men in later years. This alien abduction was included in the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) which is the world's largest civilian UFO scientific research organization dedicated to the scientific study of UFOs for the benefit of humanity. Since then, the men have been on many radio interviews and talk shows around the country. It was even featured on TV's "Unsolved Mysteries" in later years. It always puzzled me why there were so many UFO sightings in northern Maine and my neighboring New Brunswick, Canada. Could there have been mass abductions and memory erasure by aliens where I lived? If so, how would I know if I had ever been abducted? Would hypnotism help me remember? The incident in Allagash is one of the first well-documented cases of multiple abductions ever recorded. MUFON reports that there were only 27 reliable or "highly probable" cases of alien abductions in the USA in 1976. This one was practically in my backyard...

From the files of the **Halifax Herald**, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Canada, August 12, 1966:

SEAL COVE – *Last night in the little harbor village of Seal Cove on Grand Manan Island off the coast of Maine, where lobster and scallop fisherman make their living and the largest industry in town is the sardine cannery, a young 9-year-old girl named Roberta witnessed a most unusual sight. The little girl was sitting in her backyard on a clear star-filled night when she spotted a stationary, 'pulsing' white light about 9:30 p.m. After ten minutes the object suddenly dropped from the sky and approached her rapidly, then swerved to a row of trees about 300 feet away and disappeared behind them. The object was long and oval shape with pointy ends.*

The girl feared for her safety so she quickly ran into her house to tell her parents. Her mother was on the phone with a neighbor. Roberta interrupted her mother's conversation and told her about seeing the 'flying saucer' and how it flew behind the trees next door. Roberta sounded alarmed, but her mother still wasn't sure the young girl was telling the truth so

she asked the neighbor to put the phone down and go take a look outside. The neighbor lived on the street located behind the trees where Roberta reported seeing the 'saucer' disappear. Six members of the neighbor's family went outside to take a look while Roberta's mother waited on the phone. When they got outside they discovered what Roberta had said was true. They all saw a large glowing oval-shaped disc with pointy ends, tilted vertically on its axis, and spinning around at a tremendous speed just outside their house. The neighbor ran back to the phone and told Roberta's mother to hurry outside.

Roberta and both her parents ran outside and noticed the flying saucer was closer and lower to the ground near the trees. Roberta also noticed the object was not positioned horizontally, but was now spinning vertically. It hovered over the neighbor's house so close the whole side of the gray house turned pink as if it was getting hot and about to catch fire. The object appeared to be as big as the house. As Roberta's family ran into the yard to look at it, the UFO backed up and started moving in a horizontal pattern. Other people were coming out of their homes as well and witnessing the spectacle.

Eyewitnesses reported seeing Roberta running down her driveway to follow the flying saucer. The saucer flew toward the shoreline, tilted sideways, and sped off at a 90 degree angle from its previous course, and then quickly flew behind some trees. Reports from other witnesses suggest the UFO either landed in the water or just followed the shoreline for some distance before disappearing from sight.

Residents of this small island say this is not the first time there have been UFO sightings in their neighborhood. Some claim there have been a number of strange phenomena on the island, such as a ball of fire entering a house during a thunderstorm, and a fisherman who had a close encounter with one of the UFOs, and the next day, his dark hair turned completely white.

Whatever it was in the skies of this little town, it sure left some truly remarkable and unexplained stories that will be talked about for many days to come.

From the news files of the **Moncton Times and Transcript**, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, June 3, 1967:

TROUT BROOK LAKE – *Last Thursday some fishermen in Trout Brook Lake, New Brunswick, reported seeing a small unidentified craft on the water. One fisherman reported the object was about three feet in diameter and hit the water about three feet in front of him. The object was ‘spinning like crazy’ spraying the water at least ten feet high. The object flew for some distance and submerged into the lake creating a big spray of water and making a large gurgling sound. The water rippled across the lake for several minutes after the object submerged.*

Another fisherman on a different part of the lake reported seeing three of these small round objects flying in formation and zooming across the lake at a rapid speed. After a moment they all tilted downward and submerged with a loud splash into the lake, creating a burst of steam into the air.

From the news files of the **Saint John Telegraph Journal**, St. John, New Brunswick, Canada, January 26, 1970:

SAINT JOHN – *At about 8:00 p.m. last night nearly twenty eye witnesses reported seeing an unusual pattern of lights consisting of seven dots in the sky. One person reported seeing these lights while he was with a group of friends sliding on the snow hill at the local golf course. He described the dots as being ‘white’ and perhaps ‘several miles apart’ in space. When one dot moved the other dots followed. The show lasted*

about three minutes and the lights finally disappeared across the horizon.

From the files of the **Fredericton Daily Gleaner**, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada – November 16, 1972:

GRAND LAKE – *A man and his children who were hunting deer near Grand Lake on the Maine-Canadian border reported seeing a very big 'star' moving very slowly across the sky over the lake. It was dark and the father began to shine his flashlight at the object to signal it. The object immediately turned and came toward them descending quickly and hovering above them about one hundred feet. The light was very bright and they could not see the object clearly because of the glare. The object scared the children so the father started walking them back to their cabin. As they made their way, the object disappeared. A short time later, military fighter jets swarmed the air space over the cabin.*

From the files of the **Presque Isle Star Herald**, Presque Isle, Aroostook County, Maine, USA, August 6, 1975:

LORING AIR FORCE BASE – *No one is talking at Loring about the massive red alert that happened at the base on August 4. This has alarmed many area residents who are in fear for their safety from the possibility of fallout from the nuclear weapons stored there. Efforts to interview high ranking military officers about the incident has led to the response, 'no comment – classified information.'*

When the alert sounded at 8:00 p.m. EST there was an evacuation of all military soldiers and their families from the base. Those people living close to the base remember hearing the sirens and going outside to see what was happening. One

resident who refused to have us use his name for this report feared repercussions from the military. He said he saw a bright light above the base shaped like a giant saucer spinning around with lights flashing. The object glided at a height of about two or three hundred feet in the air for several moments and then was suddenly gone.

From the files of the **North County Press**, Fort Kent, Aroostook County, Maine, USA, May 5, 1976:

ALLAGASH – *This most unusual story comes to us from a pair of fisherman who had made camp on the shores of the Allagash River near Eagle Lake. After a day of fishing, the men sat by the fire and talked about the ‘big one that got away,’ when all of a sudden in the night sky, they reported seeing a large white object about a mile away across the lake. Underneath the white sphere a bright shaft of light appeared and hit the water, moving in a horizontal pattern. The men reported that after less than a minute the beam of light disappeared and the large white object vanished. The men were shocked at what they saw. However, they were further alarmed when several hours later the same big bright object reappeared in the same location in the night sky, dropped a beam of light on the lake, and then disappeared again into thin air.*

The men swear they are being truthful about what they saw. Was it really a UFO? Was this an alien spaceship searching the far side of the lake for something? Or was it just an elaborate ‘fish tale’ like the ‘big one that got away.’ You be the judge.

In August 1976, twin brothers and two other art students from Boston College, all in their early twenties, made plans to travel to northern Maine to do some camping and fishing. It

was the end of the summer and the fall semester would be starting soon. They wanted to seek some adventure in the rugged wilderness for a few days before hitting the books. Such a trip, they hoped, would not only be fun and relaxing, but would also help to inspire some new art work when they began their studies again.

The four students packed their gear and supplies and drove north. They drove all the way to the city of Caribou, and then hired a bush pilot to fly them the remaining distance into this rugged wilderness area. The plane dropped them off in a little village on the river where they rented a large canoe big enough to hold the four of them. They loaded up their supplies and began paddling in the direction of the Telos Lake area on the Allagash waterway. After several hours they stopped and made camp for the night. They wanted to get a good night's sleep so they would be energized for a long day of fishing the next day.

Just before going to bed, the men saw a bright light in the sky, but thought it was just a weather balloon. The light appeared quite strange, and after several minutes, it seemed to implode right in front of their eyes and disappear. They all thought it was quite odd, but didn't say much more about it as they were tired and ready for bed.

The next day, the men got up and packed their belongings in their canoe. They paddled downstream and fished along the way. Being art majors, they enjoyed the natural beauty all around them. However, they were not very lucky with fishing. By the end of the day they made it to a place called Eagle Lake where they decided to make camp for the night. Because of their bad luck fishing earlier in the day, they decided to fish at night believing they would be more successful.

So, before leaving in their canoe, they built a big bonfire to mark their campsite like a beacon so they could find their way back. Then they began paddling to a location not far from away.

When they found a nice spot, they anchored their boat, took out their poles, and began to fish. They could see their bonfire burning brightly as they waited for bites.

Moments later, one of the students had the feeling that he was being watched. He turned in the direction where he thought it was coming from and saw a large bright-colored sphere of light, hovering motionless and silent in the air, similar to the one they all had seen the night before.

The man yelled for his companions to look. All four men watched as the large glowing oval-shaped object began rising slowly above the trees. The light was so bright they strained their eyes to see it clearly. It appeared to be spinning horizontally on an internal axis like a gyroscope.

The men were mesmerized by what they were seeing. One man took a flashlight and started beaming signals at it which caused the object to immediately stop spinning and then glide slowly towards them. When it got near, a tube of light sprang out from beneath the large sphere and hit the water next to them. The tube of light floated toward their canoe. The men became quite frightened at this point and began to paddle the boat away from the beam heading in their direction. They knew there was no way they could escape it. Within seconds the light swallowed them up.

The next thing the four men remembered was frantically paddling to get away from the light. One of the men was in a trancelike state and couldn't paddle. When they reached the shore they got out of their canoe and stood on the bank watching the UFO. It hovered above the water for several minutes like it was watching them before it shot straight up in the air and flew away. At the same time, the man in the "trance" seemed to come back to his senses.

The men were stunned. What had just happened? Just a few minutes ago they were struck by the bright light from the UFO and the next minute they were paddling back to shore. They walked to their campsite and were shocked to see that their

huge bonfire had burned down to small red coals in a matter of just minutes. There had been enough wood on the fire to burn for at least three or four hours before burning down to embers. They were only gone about twenty minutes. None could explain the lapse in time. The men were very tired at that point, and since their fire had burned out, they decided to go to bed without talking more about the incident.

The next day the men got up, made breakfast, and packed their gear. They did not say much about what they had seen the night before, but just got into their boat, and made their way back home.

Over the next few months the four men kept in touch with each other and talked about strange dreams they were having. They discovered their nightmares were the same and involved alien creatures paralyzing them and examining them on a table with strange instruments. The men feared they had been abducted by aliens in the UFO they had seen on the Allagash River. But none of them could recall what had happened to them during the two or three hour lapse of time. So they decided to find a hypnotist to help them learn what had happened to them.

The men were hypnotized separately. The hypnotist took each one back to the time when they were in their canoe being swallowed up by the hollow beam of light. Under hypnosis, the men were able to describe what happened to them during the missing time. Each one remembered being transported within the tube of light into the spacecraft. Inside there were strange hairless humanoid creatures with big black “bug-like” eyes, small mouths and ears, thin arms with long slender fingers, and a very thin white human-like body. The aliens did not speak, but could communicate telepathically.

The men were together in a white room aboard the ship. They were paralyzed by the alien’s mind control and had to completely submit to their demands. They remembered being forced to undress and sit while the creatures examined them

one by one on a table. The aliens somehow communicated telepathically to the men that if they cooperated they would not be harmed. The aliens looked in their eyes, nose, mouth, and ears with a strange instrument. Then they used other instruments to poke them in different places on their bodies. They removed skin samples from the men along with bodily fluids such as blood, urine, saliva, and semen. Afterwards, the aliens put them in a room where a bright hollow light engulfed them and transported them back to their canoe.

Without the benefit of talking with each other after hypnotism, the four college art students were each able to draw identical images of the aliens, the inside of the UFO, and the things that happened to them during their examinations.

Now they understood what happened to them during the lapse of time. It all made sense. But they still could not stop the dreams they were having and, over the months and years to come, they each believed the aliens were revisiting them.

One of the men actually believed he was re-abducted by the same aliens. He had a dream of floating in a white light. The next day when he went outside he noticed there was a large bare patch on his ivy covered wall.

A second man saw a strange white light near his home and had the feeling it was watching him, and then it suddenly disappeared.

A third man reported he and his wife were sleeping when the family dog started barking in the middle of the night. The man opened the front door to let the dog out thinking it needed to go to the bathroom. However, when he opened the door there was a bright light from an object floating in the sky over in a nearby field. The bright light began to put his mind in a trance, but he fought it, and slammed the door shut.

He began to panic, running to his bedroom and hiding under the covers. He called out his wife's name, but she did not answer. Soon, he could hear something in his house moving in his direction. The sound kept getting closer and

closer until he could hear his bedroom door open. The man was shaking with fear, clutching his pillow tightly. Within moments, the covers began to move slowly down his body pulled by some unknown force. There was a light in the room coming from his windows and bedroom door.

He turned his head to the right and saw the alien creature standing next to his bed. It had big eyes and a big head with no ears and a humanoid-like body just like the ones he saw in the UFO. He turned his head to the left and saw another alien standing on the opposite side of his bed next to his wife. A bright hollow tube of light came slowly through his bedroom door, and then everything went blank. The next thing he remembered he was back in his bed with his wife. He was extremely tired at this point and fell fast asleep.

The next day the man remembered being visited by the aliens the previous night. But he could not remember anything after seeing the bright light coming through his bedroom door. He told his wife about it, but she did not believe him, although she did remember having a dream about a deer with big eyes standing next to her bed.

The man decided to be hypnotized again and asked his wife to do the same. She agreed, but when she tried, she was not responsive enough to be put in a trance. The man did undergo hypnotic regression and discovered after the bright hollow beam of light had entered his bedroom, he and his wife had been levitated in the air and transported in a floating stream of white light, through the open front door of their home, and into the spaceship. At this point they were separated. Like before, the alien humanoid-type creatures did tests on him, taking bodily fluids and skin samples with their strange equipment.

After the examination, the man was brought into another room where he was reunited with his wife. Then they were both sucked into a bright hollow beam of light and transported

through their front door of their home, into their bedroom, and back into bed.

After a few days the man found a strange lump under his skin on the back of his ankle. His wife showed him she had an identical lump in the same location on her ankle. They both went to the doctor who thought it was strange they had developed identical lumps, but didn't believe the man's story about alien abduction. However, the doctor did cut out the lumps from their ankles and had them sent to the lab for testing. At the lab, the scientists could not determine the nature of the objects so they called in some experts from the Centers For Disease Control (CDC) who were also baffled by the strange objects. It appeared to be some sort of highly developed biological growth like nothing that they had ever seen before.

The CDC scientists consulted with military experts who took over the investigation of the objects. Several military scientists interviewed the man and wife, but would not tell them anything about the research they were doing. The military scientists left and refused to cooperate with any phone calls or letters from the couple.

The man later learned the other three men with him in Allagash were also having similar "re-abduction" experiences and were finding lumps on their legs as well. They also had the lumps removed, and were soon visited by military scientists who wanted to hear their story about abduction. When asked, the scientists refused to tell them anything they knew about UFOs and aliens.

But the scientists were definitely very interested in what happened in the Allagash waterway that one day in August 1976. They asked the men many questions trying to find out the exact location of their campsite and from which direction the UFO had come.

The men were concerned about the scientist's lack of cooperation, so they decided to take their story to the

newspapers. Now, folks around northern Maine are starting to worry. They are concerned the military is hiding the truth about the UFO encounter.

Over the coming months, a growing number of people are reporting being visited by aliens in the night and having lumps on the backs of their legs. Additionally, many people are seeing strange lights over the Allagash waterway. Military scientists are still collecting strange lumps from northern Maine residents, without confirming or denying any knowledge about UFOs and alien abductions.

So, if you are in northern Maine and see a UFO in the sky sprouting a hollow beam of light, and later an alien creature standing in your bedroom at night, be prepared for an extraterrestrial medical exam, a suspicious lump under your skin, and a visit from friendly, but far from helpful, military scientists.

THE BEAR CAVE

Haystack Mountain is about five miles west from my hometown of Mapleton. It rises out of the ground 1,142 feet above sea level. It has an abrupt appearance from the ground in the form of a "haystack"; hence its name. It is said the mountain was once a volcano and there is some evidence to support it with the reddish rock spread around the perimeter. The parking lot is located right off the highway, at the south base of the mountain, and the climb takes about an hour with a few rest stops in between. I have done it many times before, and have always stayed on the main path. However, one day in August 1978 I decided to stray from the path to look for the bear cave on the other side I had heard rumors about for years. My curiosity almost got the better of me...

It was August in northern Maine. I was 16 years old and had just received my driver's license the month before. What a great feeling to be riding around in my blue 1972 Pontiac LeMans! I had saved enough money over the summer doing construction work to buy it just last week. When I got home, I washed it all up so it was nice and shiny and drove up and down Main Street a few times just to let everybody know there was a new driver in town.

A week later I got into my LeMans to go to work. This was my first full summer working for a local construction company. I was putting in a half a day of work with Charles, a friend of mine, who was just a few months older than me. We often worked together on the same construction site. Today we were stocking up scaffolding with cement blocks for a new medical building near the hospital. We piled the blocks two high all along the planks, leaving room for mud trays ever five feet. This was a typical Saturday morning job for me. The masons didn't work on Saturdays because it was big overtime money for them and just peanuts for us. Everything would be ready for them to start on Monday morning.

On this particular morning, Charles was talking about his recent trip to Baxter State Park in Maine where he and his older brother had hiked to Chimney Pond. He said it took the two of them six hours round trip to do it. Chimney Pond is

located at the base of the mountain before the rugged climb really begins.

“Why didn’t climb to the top of the mountain?” I asked.

“Well, my brother said it was too hard. It would have taken us 10 hours over pretty rough terrain. He said we were just a pair of ‘novices.’ I wanted to do it but he just said ‘no, maybe another day.’”

I thought about what he said for a moment and recalled the mountain I had climbed earlier this summer with my dad and younger brother, Donald, which was only five miles away. It is called a “mountain,” but it was really more of a steep “hill.”

“Hey, how ‘bout we go climb Haystack Mountain after work today?” I asked Charles.

He said, “I’ve never climbed that one before.”

“Well, it took me only two hours to climb it earlier this summer, but I took a few breaks,” I told Charles. “We could cut that time in half if we push the pace.”

Charles agreed. We were both looking for something to do in the afternoon after work so we decided to grab a lunch at home and meet at the base of the mountain at 1 p.m.

After I had eaten, I left a note for my folks who were out of town shopping that I would be climbing Haystack today in case they got home before I returned. My younger brothers and sisters were also out working or doing some other activity. I made a couple of extra sandwiches, grabbed my hiking pack full of gear, filled my canteen full of water, and took off in my car for the mountain.

I pulled into the grassy parking area at the base of the mountain with my LeMans a little after 1 p.m. There were several vehicles parked in the grass. Charles was already waiting for me, leaning against his orange 1970 Plymouth Duster. He was chewing on a piece of grass and looking up at the mountain. I glanced up as well, noting the appearance as I had so many times before. I squinted and could just see a tiny person standing on the top.

“So this should only take us two hours?” asked Charles. “That would give me plenty of time to get home to watch the Red Sox play the Yankees this afternoon at 4 p.m.”

“When I climbed it with my dad and brother we took a few rest stops – you know, for my younger brother who had trouble keeping up with us. I could have done it a lot faster alone,” I boasted. I remembered my dad wanted to make sure no one got hurt during the steep incline, especially my younger brother who was only 13.

I slung my pack of supplies and water over my shoulders and started hiking with Charles up the winding trail on the south side of the mountain. This was considered the main trail – the only trail – up the mountain. My dad had told me it was dangerous to try to climb it in any other direction. There were steep rocks and uneven terrain on the other sides making the footing quite slippery and unstable. Some people had tried years ago and had fallen to their death.

I led the way for the first part of the climb. Charles and I were both in good shape from the physical labor we had done all summer. Climbing this mountain today would be a piece of cake. This was a popular place for travelers and novice climbers to pull off the main road to make a quick climb before making their way to where they were going. We passed a few people coming back down as we were heading up, including an older teen boy and girl walking hand in hand, a lone man possibly in his early thirties carrying a hiking stick, and an older couple with binoculars around his neck and a camera around hers.

“Hey, check out the lava rocks,” said Charles as he picked up a chunk of reddish rock. “It looks like fossilized lava.”

“Well, this used to be a volcano at one time when dinosaurs walked the earth,” I replied. I picked up a piece of the lightweight rock and looked it over. I put a piece of it in my pocket for my collection at home.

My dad had told me about the mountain being a volcano at one time. He said when the volcano died the molten lava sealed up the top and “capped” it off, leaving a hollow interior like a jelly roll without the jelly. Then I remembered what he said about the north side. Although it was dangerous, many people have hiked it to find the secret bear’s cave. Apparently it is well hidden and only a few people have ever found it. One person even died trying. It seems he slipped on some loose rocks and fell to his death on the jagged rocks below.

“Does a real bear live in the cave?” I had asked my dad.

“There could be,” he replied. “Bears have been seen running through these woods for years.”

“Have you ever seen the cave?” I asked him.

“No, I haven’t,” he replied. “But one time I did go look for it with your uncle Richard. We made our own trail because there were none on the backside of the mountain. We were about two thirds of the way up the mountain when, out of nowhere, a bear came charging down at us. It was acting crazy like it was possessed or something. It came within ten feet of us, snarling and shaking its head back and forth. It paced around for a few seconds and then left. I thought it must have been wounded or something. We were both shaking in our shoes so we abandoned our plans to find the cave.”

After remembering what my dad had said about the cave, I turned and looked at Charles a few steps behind.

“Hey Charles, did you know there is a real, honest to goodness, bear cave on the other side of this mountain?”

“Really? A bear cave? How do you know? Have you ever seen it?”

“I haven’t seen it, but my dad has told me about it. He went to look for it one time but a bear chased him away.”

“Wow, he’s lucky the bear didn’t attack him,” said Charles. “It could have seriously killed him. So, if he didn’t really find the cave, how do you know it exists?”

“I’m sure it exists. Why else would so many people talk about it over the years if it weren’t true? I guess it must be just hard to find for some reason. Heck, if it was so easy there would be trails everywhere, and signs pointing out the way. They would probably even make it into a tourist attraction or something. Anyway, I’m sure it’s not much of a cave.”

We stopped talking about it for the moment and continued on our way up the mountain. As we ascended through the tree line the climb became more difficult. We used our hands more to pull ourselves up the trail, grabbing rocks, roots, and branches. We stepped on rocks and boulders, being careful not to slip on any loose rocks along the way. We maneuvered through large crevices in the rocks to avoid having to climb the abrupt vertical face.

We stopped again for a break, but this time it was to look around. We were high enough now to see above the trees at the wondrous landscape all around us. On this hot clear August day visibility was incredible. Off to the south – the only direction we could see at the moment – was Squapan Lake about five miles away. Just beyond Squapan was Mount Katahdin about 90 miles away. In between the two there was a blanket of trees.

After a gratuitous helping of natural beauty, we continued our climb. This would be the hardest section to maneuver – all rocks and boulders with no real defined path. Someone had covered the rocks with paint so we knew we were going the right way. We followed the marked trail for another fifteen minutes before reaching the top of the mountain.

I was delighted to see we were the only ones up there. No one would care if we screamed our names or threw rocks over the edge. Looking over the edge to the south I could see our vehicles below like little model cars sitting in the grass. The top of the mountain was covered with rocks, small bushes, and vines. It was somewhat flat for a short distance before quickly sloping downward in every direction. There were charred

remains of someone's campfire in the middle of the flat spot. In one small section we found some blueberry bushes and picked a few berries to eat as we enjoyed the awe-inspiring landscape before us. The trees blanketed the countryside for as far as the eye could see.

I looked down the backside of the mountain to the north and could see a thick covering of tress and not much more. Without giving it much thought, I decided to offer a challenge for the both of us.

I turned and looked Charles directly in the eye and said, "That bear cave is probably right down there somewhere, and if we were really daring, we would go back down the mountain in that direction and try to find it on our way out."

Charles thought about it for a moment, and then said, "If there really *IS* a cave down there with a bear in it, why would we want to go see it? I don't really feel like being bear food today. What if we get lost or something, or trip and fall down the mountain like that boy did a few years ago?"

Charles was referring to Clyde who had been exploring the mountain with his father when he slipped and fell. He was crushed on the rocks below.

"Ah, come on," I encouraged. "We're not going to fall or get lost. As far as that bear is concerned, I'm sure it's long gone by now. The hunters probably shot him years ago. I drive by this mountain all the time and I have never seen a bear around these parts, and wouldn't it be front page news if people were climbing around this mountain and got attacked by a bear?"

This seemed to make sense to me and I hoped it did for Charles as well. I was more and more excited about the prospect of finding a real cave near my home. Who knows what ancient secrets might be locked up inside.

I looked at Charles and waited for him to make up his mind about finding the cave. He hesitated and kept looking at his wristwatch.

“Well, I...I don’t know,” he stammered. “I’m gonna miss my Sox game. I didn’t tell anybody where I was going. What if we need help or something? Nobody will know where to look for us.”

“Come on,” I coaxed, “I left a note for my parents before I left home. Our cars are at the base of the mountain. It won’t take long for someone to figure it out. Anyway, nothing is going to happen to us. I’m a Star Scout and I can handle anything. See, right here in my pouch I have my jackknife, matches, compass, and flashlight. Besides, won’t it be cool to explore a real cave?”

Charles thought about it for a few more seconds and finally said, “Well, alright, I suppose it would be neat to find a real cave.”

“Great!” I exclaimed. “Let’s head down the north side right now. Follow me.”

As we began our descent it was obvious very few people had taken this route. There were no trails or paint markings anywhere. The rocks were loose and skidded under our feet making the traveling tricky and hazardous. We were cautious where we stepped, using our hands as much as possible to hold rocks, tree limbs, or anything else we could find to avoid a tumble to the bottom.

After a few minutes of walking, I stepped on a large boulder and looked downward. There was a 200 foot vertical drop right in front of me, with lots of rocks and boulders below. Farther down there were trees and shrubs. Farther down the trees were taller and thicker.

I looked over at Charles who was just joining me on the rock. He took a peak over the edge being careful not to get too close.

“Man, that is *one* mean drop,” he exclaimed. He picked up a small rock and threw it down, counting, “One thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three, one thousand

four...four seconds. A fall like that could really do some damage to a guy like me.”

I looked down and said, “My guess is that the cave is not far below us. It’s got to be in some rocky area, or else it would be too easy to find.”

We continued our downward climb keeping a good eye out for the cave. About fifteen minutes later we took another break and looked around. I took a swig of my canteen and offered some to Charles who gladly helped himself. I observed some of the boulders around us. It was as if a giant had grabbed a handful of rocks and threw them around the mountainside. They were wedged in tight to one another. It would take a stick of dynamite or a nuclear explosion to move any of them.

I put my canteen strap back on my shoulder and took one step forward and suddenly stopped.

“Wait,” I beckoned to Charles, holding up one hand to keep him back. “Look over there.”

I pointed to a flat area in front of a large boulder.

“I don’t see anything,” Charles remarked glancing around.

“Over there. Don’t you think that big rock looks unusual? It isn’t wedged in like the other rocks. It almost looks like it was placed there to hide something.” If my hunch was correct, we would soon find the location of the secret bear cave.

I walked up to the rock and sized it up. It was rather tall being several feet above my head, and was leaning back on some other large rocks. There were some smaller rocks wedged in around the big one to fill in cracks that might show what was underneath.

“Come on, Charles,” I exclaimed, “This has to be it! We’ve got to move these smaller rocks so we can see behind this big one. I’ll bet the cave is right here!”

Charles agreed and we began pulling rocks the size of bowling balls from around the large boulder, throwing them here and there. It wasn’t too long before we could see a cavity behind the big rock the smaller rocks had covered. I took out

my flashlight and shined it into the hole. Sure enough, it was the cave.

"Wow, you found it," said Charles. "But why are these rocks covering it?"

"Well, from the way they are piled, I think somebody was intentionally trying to hide it," I answered.

"But why would they do such a thing?" asked Charles. "Why not just leave it alone?"

"I don't know. But we don't have to worry about a bear being in there now. All we have to do is clear out enough of these smaller rocks to give us enough room to slip in."

We dug and dug until there was a narrow crevice behind the big rock large enough for us to crawl through.

"Okay," I said. "I'll go first and let you know when I am ready."

Charles looked uneasy. He eyed the hole in the ground and said, "Well, you can go in. I'll just wait for you here. I get so claustrophobic, you know, that I don't think I'll be able to do it. I'll just hang out here while you go in and explore it. I don't mind."

"As you wish," I replied, taking off my canteen and pack and laying them on the ground. I kept my matches in my pocket just in case I needed them. I learned in Scouts you *never* went anywhere without your matches.

"I won't be too long," I said. "I just want to see how deep it is."

What I really wanted to do was search for hidden treasures, fossils, or maybe some gold nuggets.

I looked through the hole with my flashlight again and noticed the cave appeared to slope gradually downward and didn't drop off completely like some caves. It looked safe enough and I was eager to get inside and take a look around.

"Philip, are you sure about this. I mean, someone covered up this cave for a reason like they were trying to keep other people from *going in*." He emphasized the words *going in* to

add seriousness to the situation. Then he added, “Or maybe they were trying to keep something from *getting out*.”

I disregarded what he was saying as I was too excited about this tremendous discovery.

“Okay, I’m heading in now,” I announced.

I crawled on my hands and knees trying to protect my flashlight as I made my way through the opening. Once inside, I stood up and shone my light around. The ceiling was about two feet above my head. I expected the cave to dead end after about eight or ten feet, but as I trained my light around the room I noticed I had guessed wrong. It was much deeper.

“I’m going deeper now,” I yelled back to Charles.

I took a few steps, noticing the dank air was getting cooler as I went deeper in. The passage appeared to be getting wider and the ceiling taller as I made my way downward. I wondered if this cave was once an artery for the volcano to spew its lava out of the earth. I had heard that even though volcanoes erupted through their top, they also blew out holes from the sides as well due to the extreme high pressure. If that were the case, I may be walking to the main artery and a drop off to a bottomless pit.

I walked carefully training my light around as I took each step, making sure I didn’t step off a ledge or bump my head on some outcropping. I didn’t have proper cave gear and I knew I shouldn’t be in here alone. However, I knew Charles was outside waiting for me. I didn’t plan on being gone very long anyway. Just long enough to see what was inside.

I shone the light above me and looked at the rocky ceiling. It certainly looked strong enough, having lasted all these years, so I was sure it had to be solid. I shone the light down in front of me, took another step, and stopped dead in my tracks.

My light captured a skull and rib cage just inches in front of me. I had almost stepped on them. I sucked in my breath. I didn’t expect to find *bones* in this cave. The remains were of an animal – a very large animal, most likely a black bear. The

skeleton was perfectly intact and lay stretched out on the floor of the cave. I could see the sharp teeth in the skull and wondered what it had eaten for its last meal. I guessed the bear had suffocated or had starved to death.

I was feeling a little bit uneasy standing here in front of this corpse. What if the bear's ghost was lurking around this cave after being trapped in here for all these years? Surely if people haunted places why couldn't animals? I had to get back out of here before *something* answered this question for me.

I moved the flashlight to the side of the bear and was shocked to see more bones – human bones! Femurs, ribs, pelvises, and three separate skulls, their empty sockets staring back at me as I stared back. Amongst the bones were shoes, shirts, underwear, a ball cap, a backpack, eye glasses, and a wristwatch. I was in the cave of a man-eating bear and this was his collection of human remains.

I couldn't be sure, but I guessed someone had decided to seal this bear up in its tomb forever after it had killed one too many people. They had most likely cornered the bear, not realizing there were actually human remains inside that needed to be collected and properly buried. It was probably safer just to seal the bear up in his own tomb rather than go inside and kill it.

I dared not take my light off the skulls, half expecting them to move in some manner, their jaw bones dropping, to speak to me about their final hours on earth.

"Hello, Philip, care to join us for dinner?" I imagined one of them saying.

"It only hurts when I laugh," said the second.

"Plenty to go around, so dig in," said the third.

All of a sudden, I heard a sound from the cave depths below, like a soft whistling that turned to humming. It could have been the breeze coming into the cave and swirling around the cracks and crevices, or it could have been the beginnings of another volcano rumbling below trying to make

its way to the surface. I thought it was neither. It had to be the bear's spirit trying to get out after being locked away for so long.

Wooooooh, eeeeeeeeh, ooooooooooh.

I turned quickly wanting to get out of there as fast as I could, but as I did so, my flashlight bumped a rock outcropping and fell to the ground, immediately shutting off. Now it was pitch black.

Don't panic, I begged myself. Just bend over and pick up the flashlight.

I heard the noise again.

Wooooooh, eeeeeeeeh, ooooooooooh!

I forgot about trying to stay calm and immediately panicked. I dropped down on my hands and knees and started raking the dirt looking for it, but instead of the flashlight, my hands gripped a cold hard femur.

Shocked at my discovery, I quickly let go. I tried moving my hand a little more to the right thinking the flashlight must have bounced a few feet away, but all I could feel were more bones.

Lord, don't let me touch a skull full of worms and maggots, I thought.

My light had to be here somewhere. I thought about calling for Charles, but he wouldn't be much help without a flashlight himself. I just needed to find mine and get the heck out of Dodge.

I thought about just walking in the direction of the cave entrance without the light, but then I decided I would be too risky if I were to trip or bump my head on something.

I pawed around a little more, hoping to get lucky and find it. My breathing was getting heavy and I feared I would pass out from either the horrid death stricken air or my own jittered nerves. I had to remain cool and collected.

No need to panic, I thought. It's got to be right here not too far away.

As I continued to swipe my hand around from left to right I finally came across it and picked it up. I stood up and tried the switch but it didn't work. I shook it a little and tried again.

Nothing.

Wooooooh, eeeeeeeeh, ooooooooooh!

I imagined the sound was turning into a humanlike voice.

"Wooooooh, eeeeeeeeh, ooooooooooh! I'm coming to get yoooooooouu!"

I flicked the switch again and the flashlight came on. I hurried back as quickly as I could with my light bouncing around in front of me until I was at the small opening in the rocks where Charles was waiting. As I wiggled the upper half of my body out of the hole I was intensely fearful something would grab my legs in their jaws and pull me back in. When my whole body was through, I stood up, and was still shaking like a leaf.

"Philip, you look as white as a ghost," said Charles. "What's the matter, did you see a bear?"

"I'll tell you about it on our way out of here," I replied.

As we went down the mountain, I told him what I had seen in the cave. I would tell my parents about it when I got home, and they would likely call the authorities.

So, that's what I did. The bodies were brought out of the cave and laid to rest in the local cemetery. They were identified as two missing hunters from more than twenty years ago. No one really knew the story as to why the cave was sealed up. I still believe a group of villagers decided to take matters into their own hands and get rid of this bloodthirsty man-eating bear once and for all. When they couldn't shoot it, they sealed it in the tomb instead.

I have climbed the mountain since then, but I have no desire to go back to the north side to see the cave ever again.

THE SQUAPAN LAKE CREATURE

Squapan is a narrow “V” shaped lake in a remote area of northern Maine that is eighteen miles long and is situated next to 4 million acres of the “big woods.” The depth of the lake is debatable as there are reportedly caverns and “bottomless” holes located in spots all along the bottom. There are a few camps on the northeast side with very few elsewhere. Much of the lake to the southwest is unexplored. My friend’s parents had one of the few cabins on the lake and we spent many weekends there over a few summers playing cards and telling stories. Both of us had grown up hearing tales about the Squapan Lake Creature. We didn’t know for sure if he existed, but being as brave and adventurous as we were, we decided that we needed to go find out for ourselves...

Deep in the bowels of Squapan swamp there lived a most hideous and deformed creature with no other name than just ‘creature.’ It was called that because it looked so unusual no one could think of a better name for it. It was designed perfectly to live in the water or on the land. It was fifteen feet tall with the head of a giant salamander and rows and rows of razor sharp teeth. It had great big purple – no, green – eyes that could see in either the dark murky water, or in the deep forest on any moonless summer night. Its arms were short and stubby like dolphin fins. At the end of each short arm was a sharp bear-like claw that could slice a man in two with one swift stroke. Because his arms were so short the creature used his mouth to grab its victim and clench down like vice grips to keep it from moving as it clawed and sliced the prey into little pieces. Below the beast’s waist were large human-like legs for traveling on land. It hunted by night and slept during the day in a cave at the bottom of Squapan Lake.

In 1964 it wiped out a whole group of high school kids who were swimming in the water at night during a graduation party. The creature pulled the swimmers under the water and bit their heads off. One by one each headless body floated up to the

surface of the water and bobbed around for a few minutes, gushing warm blood before the other swimmers realized there was a problem.

Pandemonium ensued as the remaining swimmers frantically tried to get to shore. However, the creature was quick and managed to get every kid except for one. The survivor reached the shore and was about to pull himself out when the creature grabbed his legs and amputated him from the knees down. The boy dragged his body up on shore by clawing at the ground. He found some articles of clothing and made a tourniquet to stop the bleeding.

The next day he was found along with some of the body parts of the other kids. There was a massive search for the creature in the lake, but it was not found. The survivor didn't actually know what the creature looked like, but from the size and shape of the bite marks on him and the dead bodies, the authorities concluded it had to be the legendary Squapan Lake Creature that had committed similar atrocities in the past.

Seven more years went by without incident until 1971 when the creature struck again. This time it attacked a young married couple while they were camping along a secluded section of the lake. The two had just settled down in their tent to sleep when all of a sudden the side of the tent was ripped down the middle by a sharp claw. The girl screamed, but no one heard her, except her husband and the creature of course. It bit the guy's head off and swallowed it in one big gulp. Using its foul smelling mouth, it grabbed the woman by the midsection and began to de-limb her, starting with her left arm and ending with her right leg, like a playful kid plucking the petals off a dandelion. All she could do was watch

in horror. Then it laid her body down and picked up her husband's decapitated body. It lifted him up by the torso, tipped him up like a drinking glass, and sucked the blood out of his spurting neck. Then it returned to the woman and decapitated her as well, drinking her blood in the same manner.

After having a nice meal, the creature slinked away back into the water and down into its hellish cave.

Mark finished the story once again in the most gruesome and horrific manner – to my complete and utter delight!

“Far out! Awesome!” I exclaimed. “That’s the best version of that story I have ever heard. Wow! You’ve *got* to tell it just like that at our next Camporee without leaving *one single word out*. All those new Scouts are going to be *soooo* scared. It’s going to be so cool. I can’t wait.”

I could hardly contain my excitement. He had told this story so many times before, but none any better than he did on this Friday night in July 1979. We were hanging out together at his parent’s camp in Squapan for the weekend. Sometimes it was just the two of us there, but other times Mark’s cousin, Todd, would stop by and crash for a night or two. Spending time at Mark’s camp gave us the opportunity to hone our card playing skills and practice our storytelling for future Boy Scout trips.

When Mark had finished, I asked him when he had first heard the story of the Squapan Lake Creature.

“Well, let me tell you, the story’s been around a lot longer than you and me,” he began. “It is part of the folklore of the lake. You see, my dad heard it from his dad who used to hunt in these woods many years ago before he built this cabin. Who *really* knows how these stories begin anyway? Maybe there is some truth to it. After all, the lake is spring fed from holes that

are deep down at the bottom of the lake. I suppose there could be caverns and caves all over the place down there.”

I thought about this possibility. Creatures were known to live in lakes all around the world. The most popular one, of course, was the Loch Ness monster named “Nessie” in Scotland. Everyone has heard the story about Nessie. Loch Ness is the deepest and most voluminous lake in the United Kingdom. Since first being photographed in 1933, Nessie has been sighted there many times. The 1933 picture was widely distributed around the world in magazines and then on TV. The fuzzy photo seems to depict a serpent-like creature with a long thin head jutting out of the water like an elephant trunk. There have been other reports that Nessie has been seen on land and then reentering the water. These witnesses report that the creature appeared to be about 25 feet long with a large body, a long narrow neck, a small head, and flippers. Since the 1960s, sonar equipment has found on more than one occasion evidence of a large moving object on the lake’s bottom. Some say that Nessie might actually be a plesiosaur that has evolved over time from the Mesozoic era. Loch Ness would be the ideal location for such a remarkable discovery.

But the Loch Ness Monster is just one of many sea creatures in history. I remembered seeing a TV special about sightings of sea creatures in the United States and Canada. As early as the 1600s, a giant serpent-like creature was spotted in Lake Champlain by local Indian tribes. This creature was seen again in 1883 when a local sheriff reported a giant creature in the lake about fifty feet away from him. He described it as being 25 to 30 feet in length with white spots in its mouth. Other reports over the years have described it as having multiple humps with a head like a horse and jaws like an alligator. The creature was dubbed the “Champ” after Lake Champlain.

In the 1700’s, in my neighboring New Brunswick, Canada, the “Lake Utopia Monster” was first sighted. At that time,

Maliseet Indians were canoeing on the river when a giant serpent-like creature chased them across the lake. There have been many other sightings since then. Local residents refer to the creature as “Old Ned.”

In 1817, the first recorded sighting of “Bessie” took place in Lake Erie. The locals there have referred to her as “South Bay Bessie.” She has been described as a snakelike creature about 30 to 40 feet long with a huge head. In 1992 Bessie was blamed for killing three people. Survivors witnessed the attack and described the creature pouncing on the unsuspecting victims and biting their bodies repeatedly with its sharp teeth.

In 1872, in British Columbia, Ogopogo was first sighted in the waters of Okanagan Lake. Since then there have been many sightings. Ogopogo has been described as a green lizard-like beast with a long sinuous body about 30 feet long with several large rolling humps on its back. It has a forked tail and blunt head shaped like a football. Native tribes call it N’ha-a-itk or “devil of the lake.” The local tribes have talked about the creature for hundreds of years prior to the sighting in 1872. It is widely believed the creature lives in a cave far below the water and comes out to swim around like a giant eel in the water following boats around before diving back down to the bottom of the lake.

In 1889 in Flathead Lake, Montana, a boat captain spotted a whale-like object in the waters. One of the passengers shot at it, but missed and scared it away. Since then, many people have seen the same creature which they have called the “Montana Nessie” and the “Flathead Lake Monster.” Montana Nessie has been described by many as having the body of a large eel, 12 to 20 feet long with several shiny humps, and the head of a large sturgeon. Others have reported the head was the size of a bowling ball.

I thought about these sea creatures in history and how they all had really cool names.

“Mark,” I said, “We need a real name for the Squapan Lake creature – you know, something cool, yet scary. Every other sea serpent in the world has a name. I saw a special about it one time on TV: Loch Ness has ‘Nessie’; Lake Champlain has ‘Champ’; Lake Erie has ‘Bessie’; and Lake Utopia has ‘Old Ned.’”

Before I could say anything more, Mark blurted out, “Awesome idea, Philip. I say we call it the ‘Squapan Man-Thing.’ It has a kind of nice rhyme to it.”

Hmmm, the creature in the story was kind of a like a “Man-Thing” with humanoid legs and short forearms, I thought.

“Okay,” I said, “I guess that’s better than ‘Friendly Fred’ or ‘Cheerful Chucky.’”

We played a few more hands of cards and listened to Pink Floyd’s “Dark Side of the Moon” on Mark’s record player. Some of the tracks on the scratchy vinyl LP record were spooky and made me think some more about the Squapan Man-Thing and what it would be like to search for him.

I raked in some money after showing Mark the Black Jack hand I had been dealt. Then I decided to ask him about going on a search and destroy mission this weekend.

“Hey, Mark, are we still planning on going canoeing tomorrow? If so, I have an idea. Why don’t we pack an overnight bag, a tent, and some food, and head down to the far side of the lake to look for the Squapan Man-Thing. We can make up a story about how we found it and killed it all by ourselves.”

Mark’s eyes lit up. He immediately said, “Yeah, super idea. Let’s do it. Oh, boy, this is going to be great. Very few people have ever gone to that part of the lake. This is going to be a real honest-to-goodness adventure. Who knows, maybe there really *is* a creature living in the lake.”

“Mark, why is it no one ever goes to the south end of the lake?”

“Well, much of the area is reserved for the military to practice flyby maneuvers and test aerial reconnaissance equipment. They started doing it in the mid ‘40’s. Most people just avoid doing much in the southern part of the lake because of all the aircraft noise and military activity. Some people worry the military is engaged in some kind of nuclear testing, but there is no real proof of it.”

As the night went on we continued talking about our plans including what gear and supplies we would need to take with us. It was getting late and we knew we had to get an early start in the morning so we hit the sack right away and fell asleep.

The next day, Mark woke up first and made breakfast on the gas stove. We gulped down some pancakes, bacon, and toast, and packed our bags for the trip. We loaded the 16 foot canoe so the weight was evenly distributed. By 9 a.m. we were shoving off from shore on a journey to find the Squapan Man-Thing.

We had canoed together many times before and knew what we were doing. We made good time as we put some distance between ourselves and the camp. The lake was quiet and serene as we headed southward to parts unknown. As we got farther away from civilization, we heard no more sounds of wood being chopped, dogs barking, children splashing, or of vehicles coming and going from the camps.

“One mile down, 17 to go,” I remarked as we had been traveling for about 20 minutes and I knew from previous experience this was about our paddling pace. “If my calculations are correct we should be at the other end of the lake in about six hours, or 3 p.m., as long as the waters don’t get rough.”

Tonight we would be camping in an area along the lake where there were no back roads. The only way to get there was by air, boat, or on foot. We passed the time singing some traditional Scout songs like, “Row Row Row Your Boat,” “There’s A Hole In The Bottom Of The Sea,” “Fee Fly,” “Bill

Grogan's Goat," and "There Was An Old Lady Who Lived In A Shoe."

"Do you remember the words to the summer camp song?" I asked Mark after we had finished the last song.

"The KSR song?"

"Yeah, that's the one. You know, the one about how bad the food is there."

KSR stands for Katahdin Scout Reservation. It was a tradition to sing this particular song during meals. Mark could always remember the lines to songs better than me. He quickly began the song and I joined in.

*Oh the food at KSR
They say is mighty fine,
They serve it with some rattlesnake
And chopped up porcupine*

*Oh, I, don't want to go to KSR
Please mom I want to go
But they won't let me go
Please mom I want to go home.*

*Oh the Staff at KSR
They say are mighty nice
They push you in the water
And fill your pants with mice*

*Oh, I, don't want to go to KSR
Please mom I want to go
But they won't let me go
Please mom I want to go home.*

We made up some new lyrics trying to find words that rhymed, and laughed at our silliness.

The morning went by like this for awhile as we enjoyed the natural scenery. The birds flew through the air, the sun felt warm on our bare shoulders, and the water rippled by alongside our boat as we moved forward toward an unknown destination.

I wasn't worried about finding the "Man-Thing" as we called it. I knew it was just a silly legend made up to scare and entertain people. The creature *couldn't possibly* exist. I knew it and I was pretty sure that Mark knew it, but it would still be a fun to look for it just the same so we could come back with a "shocker" of a good story to tell our young naïve Scout friends.

At about noon we pulled ashore to have lunch after making good time paddling. We made a quick meal with peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, apples, and corn chips, and then continued on our way. We stayed close to the shoreline as much as possible. We had brought our fishing poles and some crawlers for bait. We threw our lines in and let them drag behind as we floated gently along. We didn't get any bites for the longest time, but then Mark caught a small trout – maybe 5 inches long – and threw it back in.

As we continued on our journey down the peaceful waterway, my mind began to wander. I thought about how we were like Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, independent and adventurous, willing to travel the waterways wherever they may lead, and brave enough to defend against any foe that might get in their way. I thought about the book *Dracula* I had just read and about how some courageous men had taken it upon themselves to search out a creature and kill it in the middle of the night to save all mankind. Then I thought about the 1954 movie, "Godzilla" I had seen on TV recently. Like the Squapan Man-Thing, Godzilla was also a creature from the water. It lived in the Pacific Ocean and was "awakened" after being mutated by atomic radiation. It was the king of all monsters, standing over 150 feet tall and weighing more than

20 tons. It looked like a giant dinosaur with spikes up and down its back. It had an unmistakable roar that shook the countryside like an earthquake. The coolest thing about it was that it could kill people with its atomic breath ray of fire. It was invincible for a long time until a scientist and his Oxygen Destroyer machine finally killed it.

As we paddled, I occasionally looked down at the water attempting to see the bottom. When we were close to shore it was easy to see the weeds, branches, and small schools of fish, but as we got into deeper water, it was impossible to see anything but murky darkness. We were dragging our fishing lines about a half a mile from shore when I got an idea.

“Hey, Mark, stop paddling for a minute. I want to try something.”

I put my paddle on the floor of the boat, grabbed my fishing pole, and reeled it in all the way. Then I opened my tackle box and pulled out a big sinker and crimped it on the end of the line next to the hook.

“Okay, let’s see how deep it really is out here.”

I positioned the hook and sinker about a foot away from the side of the boat and let it drop into the water. As it fell, the line streamed out of the reel at a rapid pace.

“How much line do you have there?” asked Mark.

“I don’t know, maybe a hundred feet.”

The line continued to feed out for a few more seconds and then stopped. I looked inside the reel and determined it had come to the end.

“Looks like it didn’t hit bottom,” I said. “This has got to be one helluva deep spot in the lake.”

“I told you so,” said Mark. “It’s the perfect place to hide the Squapan Man-Thing.”

I reeled the line back in, put the pole away, and started paddling again.

The waters became rougher as a northwesterly wind hit us head-on, causing us difficulty moving forward. We dug our

paddles in as hard as we could – two strokes forward, one stroke back, two strokes forward, one stroke back, and so on – until it was 4 p.m., an hour behind our anticipated arrival time. We had finally reached the end of Squapan Lake and our planned destination.

I scanned the area as our boat drifted toward the shore under its own power. The lake ended in a small cove where we could see the mouth of a small stream exiting for bigger waters elsewhere. The forest was blanketed with pines, poplars, maples, spruces, firs, and cedars. As we got within twenty feet of shore, I slowed the boat down with a reverse stroke of my paddle and looked into the water. I could see the deeper water receding to the shallow water ahead. Then the front of the canoe slid along the soft sandy lake bottom and anchored itself a foot from shore.

I stepped out first, pulling the boat up on land, and then Mark exited. The shoreline was a mixture of sand and grass for about fifty feet before it reached the edge of the trees. At its high point in early spring, the lake must have covered this sandy area before receding.

“Man, this is a nice little camping spot,” I remarked. “We even have our own private sandy beach.”

“This looks like a great place to set up our creature searching headquarters,” said Mark.

I agreed and we began unloading our gear and setting up camp. We had the perfect campsite. Off to our left – the east – was a small stream coming from the lake. On our right – the west – was the tree line leading into the forest. We had our own private beach area to fish, swim, throw a baseball, and just move around.

We found a nice location to set up our tent along the tree line next to a tall fir tree with large low branches. In front of our tent facing the water we built a fire that we planned to keep going all night long. We dug out some hotdogs from our

small cooler and roasted them on a stick. So far, no sign of the creature we called “Man-Thing.”

After dinner, we explored the area away from our immediate campsite. We certainly were not the first ones to be here. Others had also used this place as a campout evidenced by the cigarette butts, some old tin cans, a tangled mess of fishing line, an old boot and some charred firewood we found.

After exploring for awhile, we decided to try our luck at fishing. This seemed like a nice spot for some big ones, and I couldn’t have been more right. We were both amazed at our success. Every few minutes one of us hauled in a nice sized trout at sizes unheard of: 22-inch, 24-inch, 28-inch and the “monster” 30-inch rainbow that took Mark ten minutes to reel in. In no time at all we had filled our bucket full of beautiful trout. Thirty-two in all; nice ones the size of which no one would ever believe.

There must be something in the water causing these fish to get so big, I thought. But what?

It didn’t seem right to me, but whatever the reason we were thrilled with our catch.

I watched as the sun fell lower in the sky. It was 7 p.m. and in a couple of hours it would be dark. The wind had calmed down some as I threw my line in one more time before calling it quits. The second it hit the water something grabbed it, almost pulling the pole out of my hands.

“What the.....Mark, I think I’ve got something.”

“Well pull it in. What are you waiting for?”

“I don’t know, but it feels like a whopper.”

I tried to reel it in, but it kept pulling my line back out.

“Unbelievable. Look Mark, this thing is taking my line like there is no tomorrow.”

I was worried about hitting the brake on my reel for fear it would break the line, so I gave it some slack instead. My pole bent downward as my line kept reeling out. I finally had to do

something, so I held the line tight and pulled on the pole. All of a sudden my line snapped.

“Well, that one got away,” I said disappointingly. “It could have been the biggest darn trout anyone has ever caught in these here parts, or anywhere else for that matter.”

“Or it could have been the Squapan Man-Thing,” said Mark trying to sound serious.

“Now that would have been the catch of a lifetime,” I joked.

We put our poles against a tree and sat next to the fire to talk and bullshit. The sun was setting fast and soon it would fall behind the trees and extinguish daylight.

“We need to stay up late, you know,” said Mark, “Cuz that’s when the Man-Thing shows himself and does his dastardly deeds.”

“You’re right. So, how are we going to lure him? You know, so we can kill him?”

“Good point,” said Mark. “Let’s make a plan. First, I say we put the fish we caught on the ground in a big perimeter around our campsite to hide our scent. Then we tie some rope to trees around our camp at ankle height to trip it. When it hits the ground, we both pounce on it with our buck knives and stab it to dead.”

“Yeah, good idea, and we could also add some booby traps,” I offered. “Like trip wires that would drop rocks and logs on its head. Maybe we could even make some spears that would swing at lightning speed to stab it after it tripped a wire. We could even lasso it and tie it up for awhile so we can learn more about it before we actually killed it.”

“Well we have plenty of rope so let’s get busy before it gets dark,” said Mark.

We took our bucket full of fresh catch and began placing them one by one in a big circle completely around our campsite. I told Mark it would be good luck to point the fish heads all in the same direction like a school of fish following

each other single file. One edge of the circle followed the beach within a foot of the water's edge. The other edge extended beyond the trees behind us.

When we were done, we began to set up booby traps. We grabbed some rope and a hatchet. We always had plenty of rope whenever we went camping because we enjoyed lashing together pioneering projects like towers and walkways. We were both very skilled at knot tying. We decided on four booby traps. The first one would be a simple length of rope tied between several trees at ankle height. If the creature tripped in the dark we would hear its massive form hit the ground like thunder. Then we could pounce on it with our knives and spears.

The next trap we called the "Log Slammer." We would set this trap one on a deer path we found just inside the row of fish. We found an eight foot solid chunk of broken maple that must have weighed about 140 lbs and was nearly 16 inches in diameter. We tied a timber hitch to it with the end of a long rope and hooked the other end to a sturdy branch about 20 feet in the air. We suspended the log about eight feet from the ground – the perfect height to "brain" the Man-Thing. We finished the trap by pulling the log backwards and hooking it to a different branch using a slip knot and running the rope along the ground for a trip line. If the creature tripped the line, it would pull the slip knot out, causing the log to swing down with terrific speed, hitting it hard on the head and hopefully knocking it out.

We proceeded to set our third booby trap about fifty feet from the Log Slammer in another pathway we had found. This trap we called "The Bow and Spear." Using some more rope, we tied one end to a root sticking out of the ground and the other end to a branch about ten feet high. Then we pulled the rope at the midsection until it was taut like a bow and arrow. Then we tied another slip knot and made a trip line that would release a spear in the air to impale the creature at heart level.

Our final booby trap we called, “The Sand Witch.” This trap was going to be right between the lake and our campfire. Using our camp shovel, we dug a six foot by six foot square hole in the soft sandy ground about four feet deep. We couldn’t go much deeper because we were nearing the water table. Then we sharpened some spears and drove them into the muddy bottom of the trap, blunt end first, and spaced them about a foot apart. If the creature fell into this hole, it would land on a blanket of sharp spears. We covered the hole with long fir branches and finished it off with sand and grass to make it look like the beach area. As a precaution, we wrote “Sand Witch” in large letters on the ground next to it so we would remember where it was and not step in it ourselves.

“This should work just fine as long as the creature can’t read,” I laughed.

“I wouldn’t be so sure of that,” replied Mark, “I heard they have compulsory education for all Man-Thing creatures in Maine, but because he is only half a man, he would only be required to take half a semester of English. Maybe we should write it in French since it isn’t one of the required courses for Man-Things.”

We had a good laugh and complimented each other on our cleverness.

After the whole campsite was booby trapped, we began to make our weapons. We cut a dozen ten foot saplings and sharpened each one to a deadly point. Afterwards, we leaned some against trees near booby traps and some near our tent. We had our knives fastened securely to our belts and our hatchets within reach. No matter which direction the Man-Thing came from we were sure to capture him.

It was about 9:35 p.m. and almost completely dark. Mark and I agreed on taking shifts in the night to watch for the creature and wake the other if we noticed anything suspicious.

“This will make a great story at our next Camporee,” I noted. “We sure did go through a lot just to make up a

whopper of a monster story.” I shone my flashlight through the trees at the various booby traps in the distance. They all appeared to be well hidden. “You know, if I wasn’t familiar with the locations of those traps, I wouldn’t even know they were there.”

“When we tell our story later, we will have to think of something to say about the creature getting into one of them,” Mark replied.

“I say he falls into the Sand Witch.” Something about that trap made me shudder as it seemed so gruesome and bloody; an awful way for a man or monster to die. I would have to be very careful around it this weekend.

Mark opened his mouth as if to say something, held off for a moment giving his future words more thought, then said, “Or.....maybe there are *two* of them and one falls into the ‘Sand Witch’ and the other one gets conked on the head with the Log Slammer.”

“Do you think it would be believable to have two of them?”

“Come on, Philip, is even one creature going to be believable?”

“Well, I guess not...unless we say they work in pairs. Then we would *really* have to lay it on thick when we told the story. We would have to convince them that we were great hunters who outsmarted and killed not one, but two ferocious beasts.”

“Okay, sounds like a plan to me,” said Mark.

I thought about how the traps might pose a danger to us. I looked over at Mark and spoke in a serious tone of voice.

“We need to be very careful not to spring any of these traps on ourselves if we want to make it out of here alive.”

We both agreed to be cautious. As we talked, the moon began to rise slowly in the sky casting more light on the area and creating eerie looking shadows. I felt a little chill on my skin despite the warm summer air.

We both stayed up until 11 p.m. Then Mark retired as I agreed to keep watch from 11 p.m. – 1 a.m. He would take the next shift from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m.

I stoked up the fire with more wood and sat for awhile poking at the embers with a short cedar stick. I took out my six-inch buck knife and began whittling a sharp point at the end of the stick.

The more weapons the better, I thought.

Above the crackling of the fire I could hear an owl hoot and the rustling of some tree branches through the otherwise silent forest.

No sign of anything lurking nearby so far, I thought.

I really didn't expect anything. I have been camping for many years and knew nothing in the woods could hurt me. Scary stories are just for entertainment. It was our job, the older Scouts, to make them as believable as possible by keeping a straight face. If we were successful, we could reel them in hook, line, and sinker, as they sat all bug-eyed and shaking in their shoes. We took a "real" world and built an "unreal" world around it. It took me some practice storytelling to finally understand how to set up the truth within the lie.

As my shift ended, I woke up Mark and we traded places. As he was coming out of the tent, I handed him my spear.

"Here, just in case you need it. I whittled it on my shift. You can use it to poke the fire, or stab a monster or two. Keep the logs piled on, okay? Whatever you do, don't nod off."

"Oh, uh huh," he said fighting off a yawn, "Okay, thanks."

I entered the tent and zipped it shut to keep the mosquitoes out.

The little zipper won't keep the Man-Thing out but it's great for little flying vampires, I thought.

I crawled into my sleeping bag, trying to stifle a yawn myself before closing my eyes and drifting off to sleep.

It felt like I had just fallen asleep when Mark called my name.

“Philip, it’s your shift.”

For a moment I thought I was dreaming.

“Philip, get up. It’s 3 a.m.”

I snapped back to reality, unzipping the sleeping bag, and pulling myself up. I could see well enough in the tent without my flashlight because of the firelight close by. I unzipped the tent and came out.

Mark handed me the poker-spear and said, “Try not to nod off, okay?”

“Yeah, yeah, no problem,” I mumbled half awake.

I sat on my stump and listened to him zip the tent shut behind him and rummage around a bit with his sleeping bag before he was quiet. I looked across the calm lake to the opposite shore then turned 180 degrees and shone my hefty flashlight behind me. The many trees there were like giant wooden specters dangling rotten hairy arms. On my left I could just barely see the Log Slammer hanging in the air. Off to the right was the faint outline of the rope and spear trap poised and ready to fire. I knew all around us were trip ropes. In front of me, buried underground, was the Sand Witch, the most dangerous trap of them all.

Okay, just don’t nod off and start sleeping walking, I thought.

I sat on my stump and poked the fire for awhile watching the flames jump and stretch upwards in colors of yellow, green, red, and blue. The random flickers of light were mesmerizing and soothing. The heat helped to fight the early morning coolness hanging in the air. The fire was not only a source of comfort from the weather, but it helped to keep the wild animals away.

I tried to stifle a yawn, but it got away from me. I looked at my watch and yawned again.

3:30 a.m.

I got up and paced around a little.

I’ve got to stay awake, I thought

I sat on the ground with my back to the stump for awhile and thought: *I could just fall asleep right here against this stump and Mark would never know. There's nothing out there anyway.*

I crossed my legs Indian style as I sat and watched the fire. I thought about the time Mark and I had been camping on the Fish River in Maine. We had set up our tent below an overpass next to the river. Every so often a logging truck would cross the bridge on its way to a paper mill in Ashland or Millinocket. We got used to the occasional noise after awhile and managed to fall asleep. When we got up the next morning, we went down to the river to brush our teeth. As we knelt by the water dipping our brushes in we were both shocked to see four long black legs with hooves sticking straight up out of the water. I knew they were not there the night before. The four legs were attached to a big bull moose upside down under the water. The large body was outlined clearly under the rippling current. Apparently a logging truck had struck it on the bridge last night while we were sleeping. It was probably dead before it hit the water. It missed hitting our tent with us in it by less than twenty feet, and we had slept right through it all.

While I was thinking about the moose, my tired mind began to drift asleep. The picture of the moose soon blended into pictures of moose creatures, giant river rats, and eels the size of crocodiles. They were all deformed, mutated, and seeking revenge for what had befallen them. They blamed humans for their grotesque condition and formed packs to wage war on mankind. One by one they walked, crawled, or slithered into towns, villages, and cities where they hunted for fresh meat and....

Crash.

I jerked awake at the sound.

“What the....”

Something had made a noise behind me. I quickly grabbed my spear and flashlight from the ground. I shone it at the Sand

Witch directly in front of me. Nothing seemed amiss there. I turned around and shone the light at the booby traps. There was nothing unusual at the Bow and Spear trap. The rope was cocked back ready to let the spear fly. I positioned the light up higher at the Log Slammer looking for the suspended log.

It wasn't there.

I quickly repositioned the light downward until it was eight feet above the ground. There it was, suspended at the right height, swaying back and forth. I could faintly hear the creaking of the rope tied to the limb high above. I shone the light underneath the log and saw a large black form.

The Man-Thing, I thought.

My heart began to race out of control.

Is that a big black thing on the ground or am I seeing things? I wondered.

Maybe the darkness was playing tricks on me. It was hard to tell from this angle, but I wasn't taking any chances. I walked a few steps to the tent while keeping my flashlight pointed in the direction of the shape.

"Mark, get up," I said in a voice just above a whisper.

I started to unzip the tent.

"Mark, get up," I said a little louder. "There's something out there."

"Huh? What?"

"Hurry up and get out here!" I shouted. I kept the light pointed in the direction of the object. I didn't want to take any chances that the black thing was going to get back on its feet and start to charge us.

Mark sat up, pulled himself out of the sleeping bag, grabbed his flashlight, and exited the tent.

"Philip, is this a joke? Come on now, this is a joke, right? Lord knows you probably owe me one after all those ones I pulled on you in the past. Okay, so what did you find, a 'coon? Porcupine? Rabbit?"

“Mark, look over there where we hung the log. There’s something on the ground – and it’s *big*.”

I pointed my flashlight on the area below the Log Slammer about 50 feet away. The light struck the black form on the ground.

“Holy crap, what the...”

Mark jerked back in astonishment, his jaw dropping open. He clicked on his own flashlight and played it on the form with mine.

“What *IS* it?” I asked bewildered.

“I don’t know, but we better do *something* quick before it jumps up and attacks us.”

“Maybe it’s dead,” I said hopefully.

“I wouldn’t be so sure,” Mark replied.

“Well if it isn’t, what are we going to do?”

Mark was silent for a moment, obviously in deep thought, and then said emphatically, “We’re going to kill it.”

My heart felt like it was going to pound straight out of my chest. The whole time I was talking with Mark I had my eyes glued to the dark shape in the woods, but I felt like I had to look him in the eye for my response.

“Okay, we’re going to kill it,” I said slowly, realizing the magnitude of my agreement. I looked over at the large shape in the woods again. “Mark, there’s no such thing as the Man-Thing, right?”

“Of course not, it must be something else. It’s probably a black bear.”

The Log Slammer was at a height of eight feet, I thought to myself. So the black bear would have to be standing on two legs and be taller than any bear in Maine’s history. Now, how likely was that? It had to be something else, but what? A moose? Moose don’t reach that height. A bear on two legs giving another bear a piggy back ride?

In a low voice I said, “Okay, then, let’s go find out.”

“Walk quietly, Philip, and hold your spear in front of you ready for anything to happen.”

We both walked slowly toward the large object on the ground with a spear in one hand and a flashlight in the other.

“I’ll flank it on the right and you take the left,” I whispered. “Be ready in case it jumps up.”

Mark nodded his head in approval.

As we approached the object, it was clear this thing was definitely very big. It was about ten or twelve feet long, four feet thick through the midsection, with thick shaggy black hair, and a strong fishy smell that nearly made me gag. The suspended log was swaying about four feet above the animal, creature, or fish – or whatever it was. It guessed it must have weighed more than 1000 lbs.

As we approached, I noticed its hind legs were pointing backwards in our direction. At the end of each leg there were large paws with long sharp claws. I looked for any signs of twitching.

“Mark, what is it?” I whispered.

“A bear,” Mark said in a low voice.

“A bear? A bear *THAT* big? You’re kidding, right?”

We had both seen bears in the woods before. One time we saw an unusually large bear when we were coming home one night from town after playing pinball and shooting pool. Mark was driving his parent’s Volkswagen bug. It was dark and a bear suddenly crossed in front of us. It came out of nowhere and stopped abruptly in our headlights. Mark swerved the car and we barely missed it. The bear looked bigger than our car. This thing on the ground – if it was a bear – was much bigger than the one we had seen that night in the Volkswagen.

I slowly walked around to the right as Mark did the same on the left. We stopped within ten feet of the animal and looked at it with our flashlights, spears ready just in case it got up. At this point I could see the entire underside of the creature. The animal had large flat forearms that appeared to

be something like claws and flippers. The neck of the animal was full of large slits like fish gills. The right side of its head was bloody and crushed in, no doubt from our Log Slammer trap. Its right eye was bloody and hanging out next to its large flattened snout. There were dead fish around his body as if he had been scraping them up to take home.

“Mark,” I whispered. “This is the strangest bear I have ever seen. I think its dead. The head is all sunken and bloody.”

Mark walked from the backside and stood next to me for a better view. From where he had been standing it probably appeared to be an unusually big black bear, but from the front where I stood, it was quite different.

He shook his head in amazement.

“Philip, this is not a bear, it’s a creature – *a bear-fish type creature*. Look at the fins it has for legs and the gilled neck. This thing can live in the water. Just look at it!”

“Are we sure it’s dead?” I was hesitant about standing so close to the thing without being sure. “I mean, it doesn’t *look* like its breathing. It looks like it took a direct blow to the side of the head with our log. I think his skull is crushed.”

“Well, just to be sure, let’s stab it. If it’s still alive it will move and when it does, we continue to stab it until it is dead.”

I agreed and we both laid our flashlights on the ground still pointing in the direction of the bear-creature-fish-thing.

“Okay, on the count of three,” said Mark pointing his spear at the belly of the creature. “One...two...three!”

We both thrust our spears into the chest of the creature and pulled them out. Suddenly, the creature shrieked in pain and started to get up. With one massive swing of its powerful winged claw it knocked Mark to the ground. I immediately stepped backwards in surprise and banged my body against a tree, now pinned between it and the creature. The hairy monster stood up on its hind legs to a full height of at least 10, maybe 12 feet. One eye drooped down from an empty bloody socket, the unfortunate result of our deadly Log Slammer. Its

neck was puffing in and out as it breathed through slits in its neck. Its mouth was opened in a horrible grimace showing me rows and rows of razor sharp teeth like that of a shark. Its massive hind legs had no problem supporting the creature's full frame. Its head swung back and forth in anger. The noise from its throat was a mixture of gurgling and growling.

“Ugggrrrrrrlllllll!”

It took a step toward me, but I couldn't move because of the tree blocking my path. I looked over at Mark who was unresponsive on the ground several feet away.

If I am going to die from this thing I hope that it is quick, I thought fearfully.

Then I remembered the spear still in my hands. I lifted it and drove it into the oncoming creature's belly. The creature stopped, screamed in pain, and grabbed the spear in its claws. As it was pulling it out with its clawed wing, I took the opportunity to run past it in the direction of the campsite.

After several steps, I could sense the creature was running at my heels ready to pounce on me. I could smell its fishy odor only a few feet away. I took one more step waiting for the pain of the claws digging in my back when I tripped on something and fell. Something whizzed by my head with a loud “*CRACK*.”

I rolled over and realized I had tripped the wire for the Bow and Spear trap. The creature was on the ground reeling in pain. In the dim moonlight I watched in horror as it tried to pull the spear out of its side. During his first attempt he broke the spear in two; during the second, he pulled it out completely. Then it lifted its gnarly deformed head to the heavens and let out a loud deafening roar that echoed throughout the woods.

I quickly got up from the ground and ran before the creature came to its full senses and chased after me again. I managed to reach the campsite and stopped, knowing I had nowhere else to go but the water.

I can't escape it by the water, I thought hopelessly. The thing LIVES in water. It would just would swim out there and eat me. I suddenly felt my days were numbered.

I looked at the area between the campfire and the lake and remembered the Sand Witch.

Would the trap be enough to hold it, I wondered? What are the chances it would fall in?

I knew at that moment I had to be bait. I could hear the creature pounding the earth with its feet heading in my direction. I ran several more yards and stopped a few feet short of the trap. I looked back and saw the creature forty feet behind me running fast. I had to take a chance and try to clear the trap. If I fell in, so be it. It was either death by the trap or by the creature. Maybe I would be lucky to clear the six foot span, although I had never done so in any physical education class before, but now it was either life or death. I took a deep breath, prepared myself mentally, and took a giant leap.

My adrenaline must have been pouring through my veins because I cleared the hole by three feet. I landed on my hands and knees, falling forward, and away from the trap. However, if the creature didn't fall it, I was still dead meat.

I couldn't see it, but I could hear branches breaking as the creature hit the trap and fell in. I spun around and saw the sharp jaws of the creature only inches from my back feet lying on the ground on the edge of the trap. Its long tongue caked in blood was sticking out of its mouth. Its useless eye dangled down along its snout. It jerked a little as the life ran out of its body. Then it lay silent. The rest of the creature's body was hidden from my sight below the ground in the Sand Witch trap.

Shaken and stirred, I got up and slowly walked to the side of the hole where I could get a better look inside. The fire nearby was burning brightly and helped to illuminate the scene. At least a half a dozen sharp spears had found their way into the bear's hind end and chest. Blood was seeping down

the sticks as it exited from the creature's wounded body. I took a few more slow steps around the hole keeping an eye on the creature for any movement. Satisfied that it was dead, I turned and ran in the direction of Mark who was still in the woods. I found him on the ground and shook his shoulders violently.

"Mark? Mark? Are you okay?"

Mark groaned, moved his head a little, and tried to open his eyes. I could see that the side of his head and neck were bloodied. The creature's sharp claw had struck him just below the ear just missing the carotid artery which would have surely killed him.

"Mark, are you okay? Get up."

Mark moved slowly, getting up on one arm first and shaking his head.

"What hit me?" He asked groggily, managing to open his eyes a little more and look at me. Then he remembered: "Where is it?!"

"I think its dead now," I replied. "It's over by the beach. We need to take care of the bleeding on your head, so just lie still for a moment."

I took off my shirt and wrapped it around his head and held direct pressure on the injury to slow the bleeding.

"Are you sure it is dead?" he asked looking past me toward the beach. "Where is it?"

"Sand Witch got it," I said.

"Oh," he said.

"I don't think anything could have lived through it," I added. "It's not a pretty sight."

After a moment he asked, "How bad is the cut?"

"You'll live. You had worse when you fell off the tower at the Presque Isle Camporee. You'll probably need a couple of stitches. We'll keep it wrapped up good to stop the bleeding until we can get you to a doctor."

I helped him to his feet and we walked back to the fire. By now it was only a hot bed of coals. The sun was just about to peek over the eastern side of the lake. We stopped next to the Sand Witch. We were able to see creature in the pit much better in the morning light. This was not a “Man-Thing” at all but a “Beast-Thing,” a creature which was mutated and deformed in some freak accident of nature. We stood there for a moment and looked at it in disbelief.

“Mark, did you say the military did some nuclear testing in this area?”

“That’s what people say, but who really knows for sure. All they got out of the military was ‘sorry, it’s classified information.’ Hey, are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“I believe so. If there was testing here, the radiation might have altered the genes in a normal black bear. Most likely, it was born this way after exposure of the mother to radiation, or some kind of nuclear waste.”

“Well, what are we going to do now?” asked Mark.

“I say we burn the corpse and cover everything up and not tell anyone what happened. No one needs to know about it. It might cause panic and people will stop using the lake or they’ll just move away. I say we leave here keeping the secret between the two of us.”

Mark thought about this for a moment and said, “Okay, I’m with you. Let’s do it.”

Over the next two hours we began piling brush and deadfall in the pit on and around the creature. Then we took our shovel and scooped all the coals from our fire into the hole, igniting the wood and the hairy creature. The fire blazed strong. The stench of burning hair and skin was almost unbearable. We covered our faces with our t-shirts as masks so we wouldn’t have to inhale the black fumes.

As the fire burned, we cleaned up the campsite and dismantled the other traps and trip ropes. We left the fish on the ground for the animals to eat. After a few hours the blaze

calmed down enough for us to start burying the rest of the remains in the hole. We shoveled in sand and dirt and completely buried what was left of the creature.

We loaded our canoe and shoved off. It was about noon when I looked back at the beach area retreating in the distance. I thought about the unusually big trout we had caught last night from these waters, and had a bad feeling about the whole thing.

I thought to myself: *No one should ever know about this Squapan Lake creature, but is it the only one?*

THE SCREECHER

The Screecher story has always haunted me ever since I first heard it at the Castle Hill Scout Camporee. It has been told for many years by older Scouts and leaders swearing by its validity. Whether with my friends or alone in the woods, I often wondered if I would ever hear that dreaded screeching sound and be its next victim...

I sat on a stump and listened to the Life Scout, Martin, tell the next scary story...

The Screecher lives in the deep dark forest of northern Maine. It has been around for many years and can never die because it has found the only source of eternal life on this planet somewhere in the deepest part of the forest. It guards this bubbling spring and drinks from it regularly.

The Screecher has killed hundreds of men in the past. No one has ever seen or heard it and lived to tell of it. The Screecher got its name from the dreaded sound it makes just before it attacks a victim. The sound begins with a low piercing scream which gradually gets louder and louder like an animal being brutally tortured. From the footprints found near dead bodies, it is believed the Screecher is a giant wolf-type creature with sharp retractable claws like a lion. It is twice as strong and fast as a grizzly bear. It has a thirst for human blood. Over the years people have known about this ungodly creature, but have never been able to find it to kill. Only the grisly remains of its victims were ever found.

One day there was a man hunting deer. He began tracking one deeper and deeper into the woods. It was getting late but the hunter really wanted to get this deer. As it got dark, he heard the most awful screeching noise he had ever heard. He looked around but could not see anything. He thought it had

gone away. He kept listening and waiting, but unfortunately for him, the sound came again, but this time it was much louder – and right behind him.

He began to run for his life. The Screecher wailed some more and the hunter knew it was getting closer. He had heard about the creature and feared he would be its next victim. At the last minute, he decided to try something unusual to save himself. He began taking off all his clothes, throwing each piece along the trail as he ran hoping the scent would throw it off his trail. Sure enough, the Screecher stopped chasing him.

When the man finally emerged from the woods he was stark naked. He told other people about what happened and how he had taken off his clothing to distract it. He truly believed he had survived because the Screecher had stopped at his clothing and thought the man was dead.

This news spread fast around the community. People were talking about the Screecher, saying the only way to survive it after hearing the dreaded screeching noise was to strip off all your clothing and run out of the woods as quickly as possibly.

Beware, all you Scouts, the Screecher still lurks in these woods. If you hear it, you will know your final moments on this earth are numbered, unless you trick it like the hunter did.

Right about then there was a loud screeching sound coming from somewhere in the dark woods. We all looked up.

Martin said, “No one move an inch. If we sit here quietly by the fire, nothing will harm us.”

A few minutes later, Lloyd, our Second Class “drama king,” came streaking out of the woods wearing nothing but a smile on his face. He couldn’t keep a straight face to pull the practical joke off. We all laughed until our ribs hurt.

Ever since I heard the story I wondered if there was any truth to it. After all, it was a story that had been told for many years in this neck of the woods. Some people swear by it, saying that it has been told in their family for years. They even knew some family members years ago who had been killed by the creature. I was skeptical, but I always kept my guard up whenever I was in the woods, just in case it was true.

One day I was camping with the Boy Scouts in a clearing at the edge of the forest in a little town called Masardis. I was cleaning the rest of the breakfast dishes with my brother, Larry, when one of our Tenderfoot Scouts, Jerry, came running out of the woods wearing only his wristwatch.

"The Screecher! The Screecher!" he yelled as he ran. "It was screaming and chasing me. Don't go in the woods or...or...or it will get you!"

Everyone looked up at him. Someone yelled, "Get some clothes on you streaker! Nobody wants to see your skinny anatomy."

Jerry covered himself up with his hands and ran into his tent to get some clothes on. Most of the boys laughed at him. No one really believed him. Then there was a noise which came from the woods where he had exited. Everyone stopped what they were doing and listened. It was like a wailing noise, as if an animal was hurt. Something was definitely wrong here. Could it really be the Screecher coming after Jerry and now the rest of us?

I dropped the dishes and yelled, "Something *IS* coming out of the woods! Look out!"

We saw a creature on all fours, big and hairy, with blood on its claws and mouth, screaming and acting crazy. It looked like it was trying to eat its own paw off. I stared at it for a moment and realized it wasn't the Screecher at all, but someone's big hairy dog that had gotten its paw caught in a trap somewhere in the woods. It was trying to bite the trap off and had nearly bitten his whole paw off in the process.

Someone recognized the dog and found the owner, one of the leaders in the campsite, who came and took the hurt animal away.

Thank God it wasn't the dreaded Screecher, I thought.

One day a few months later I was with the Boy Scouts again camping at Eagle Lake. We had just finished dinner and were sitting around the campfire telling stories when out of the woods ran a Second Class Scout named Ronnie, naked as a jaybird, and holding some crumpled toilet paper in his hands.

"The Screecher! The Screecher!" he yelled. "It's out there. I heard it. It was awful!"

We all listened and couldn't hear anything.

Someone said, "Okay, Ronnie, you're safe now. Stop putting on a show for us. Go get some clothes on that bare butt of yours."

I didn't know if Ronnie was making it up or not, but it sure was unsettling to see his frightened face. He was out in the woods taking care of business, so to speak, and was rudely interrupted by the scary noise. We hoped he had enough time to do his duty before racing back into the campsite. Whether or not it was the Screecher, he wasn't taking any chances, even if it meant some embarrassment later.

The next day we helped Ronnie find his clothes in the woods. Nobody wanted to go there last night with a flashlight just in case there *was* some kind of danger. We found his shirt in a tree limb, his pants on a log, his underwear on a different branch and his socks and shoes in a pile.

Incredibly, it looked like something with sharp claws or teeth had ripped through each piece of his clothing. Finding his clothing in this condition was unsettling. We really didn't know what to think. We hurried back to the campsite and stayed close by the rest of the weekend. Nothing else unusual happened on that trip.

At the very next camping trip at Smyrna Mills it happened again. This time it involved a Tenderfoot Scout named Bobby.

Bobby was screaming and running out of the woods in his birthday suit.

“The Screecher! The Screecher!” he screamed. “I heard it. It was out there. It sounded awful.”

Some of the older Scouts behind me started laughing. The Life Scout, Carl, asked, “Are you sure it was the Screecher and not some puny little squirrel?” Then he started laughing with the rest of us.

Behind Bobby another Scout, Frank, was coming out of the woods, nearly doubled over with laughter, and holding some of Bobby’s clothing. He caught his breath and started making a screeching sound with his voice then started laughing again. It seems that Frank had gone into the woods to hide and wait for someone to scare. He sure got Bobby good.

So for the next few campouts some of the older boys tried playing jokes on the younger boys in the same manner. At times it worked, but for the most part, everyone had caught on to the joke. However, there were still some newer Scouts who were believers and always took a buddy with them if they had to go into the woods for any reason whatsoever.

A few months later, I was camping with the Scouts at Island Falls for the weekend. It was Saturday night and we had a good old rip-roaring fire going. There was a full moon out and it was rather spooky during our ritual storytelling around the campfire. Someone told the story of the Screecher again. As always, it sent shivers up and down my spine, but I wasn’t going to let anyone think I was scared.

After the story, one of the boys older boys, Sam, said, “I have a dare for you now. Who dares to walk alone into the woods for 20 paces and back?” Everyone raised their hands. 20 paces didn’t seem that far away.

“Okay, how about 40 paces?” he asked.

Most of the boys were stilling willing to attempt this dare.

“How about...let’s say...100 paces?”

“No way, I don’t want the Screecher to get me,” said one boy.

“Or a bear,” said another boy.

“Or the nose picking monster,” teased another boy as the rest of the kids giggled.

“Or your mother,” giggled still another boy.

Nobody raised a hand. I looked around. 100 paces would be a good distance away from the campsite. It would be far enough to be out of the view of the campfire. I could prove my bravery right here, right now.

I put up my hand and said, “I dare to do it. There’s nothing out there that can scare me.”

Did I really know what I was doing? I couldn’t believe I was volunteering, but I was stuck now. I stood up and said, “Okay, but I get to take a flashlight with me.”

They allowed me to take my flashlight so no one would get in trouble with the leaders for me getting lost.

I got up and started walking into the woods, counting my paces out loud by twos with each footstep.

“Two, four, six, eight, ten.....”

I walked slowly, making sure I didn’t get a tree branch stuck in my eye, or trip on any rocks.

I heard one boy yell in a sing-song voice, “The Screecher’s gonna get you. The Screecher’s gonna get you.”

“...twenty-four, twenty-six, twenty-eight....”

“Oh, Philip, here comes the *SCREECHER*! Don’t be *SCARED*!” another boy yelled from behind me.

“...forty, forty-two, forty-four, forty-six, forty-eight...”

“Ahhhhhhhhh!” screamed another boy and everyone around the campfire laughed.

I looked behind me. There was a distant light through the trees from the campfire. I could faintly hear some of the boys talking as the darkness kept closing in around me. Fortunately I had my flashlight which was an enormous source of comfort.

I really needed it now as the moonlight was not coming through the dense trees very well.

I continued walking.

“...seventy-two, seventy-four, seventy-six, seventy-eight....”

Okay, I thought, I'm almost at 100 paces. I can do this. I know I can. There's no turning back now.

I was sweating and my heart was pounding through my chest. I *could* turn around now and go back and they would never know I didn't cover the full distance. However, *I would know* and it would bother me in the future. This was going to be a defining moment in my Scouting career and I didn't want to mess it up.

Okay, Philip, it's time to keep moving, I thought.

“...ninety-four, ninety-six, ninety-eight, one hundred.”

I made it. I turned around quickly and started to run back to the campsite, flashlight shaking in my hand. Before I had gone more than twenty feet I tripped on something and fell to the ground. My flashlight flew into the air. I caught myself with my hands, but I still got dirt in my nose and mouth as I hit the ground.

Flashlight. Where's my flashlight? I thought desperately.

I could barely see around me. My eyes started to adjust better to the darkness as I was feeling around on all fours for my light.

What did I trip on, a log? I wondered.

My hands finally found the flashlight, but as I discovered, the compartment door had popped open and the two “C” batteries had fallen out somewhere. I felt around and found one of two and slid it into the compartment. I felt around for the second one, my hand slowly caressing the ground. I didn't find the battery, but I did find the object I had tripped on.

A rock, I thought, or a small log. Yes, a small log covered with leaves and dirt.

I followed the object with my hand until it strangely connected to a bigger log. I could tell where it ended because my hand found...

...a neck and head.

It wasn't a log, but a corpse, partially covered in dirt.

I jerked back in horror. I rubbed my hands on my clothes to get the "dead person" off my skin. I caught my breath and fought to get my heart beating again.

A cold dead body was on the ground next to me. I had tripped on a dead person, not a log. Someone, or something, had murdered this person and had left, maybe to come back later to dig a hole – or to finish its meal.

I've got to get out of here, I thought. This place reeks of death.

Then I heard the noise – a high pitched wailing sound in the distance like a hurt animal.

"Woooooo."

Then it stopped for a few seconds.

"Woooooo."

This time it was closer.

The Screecher, I thought.

I had never heard the sound before, but it had to be it. The sound was surreal, haunting, and it chilled me to the bone.

"Woooooo."

Then I imagined: *I'm right behind yoooooou! Coming to get yoooooou!*

I didn't worry about my flashlight. I made the quick decision to rip off my shirt and throw it on the corpse and get out of there. I didn't have time to take the rest of my clothes off. Maybe the Screecher would smell my shirt at the dead body and be satisfied with this meal instead of me.

I hurried through the woods in the direction of the campfire, breaking branches, and pushing the low limbs away from my face and body. Some of the branches poked into my face and chest as I was running, cutting and scratching me.

“Wooooooooo.”

Closer now and louder.

“Wooooooooo.”

I thought: *I'm coming to get yoooooooo, Philip!*

I could care less about the punishment my body was taking from the branches. I had to get away from the Screecher before it grabbed me from behind and ripped me to shreds. I was about half way back and could just see the campfire light through the trees as well as the distant sounds of voices. I took another step and tripped on something again. I picked myself up and kept moving forward.

“Wooooooooo.”

Much closer and *much* louder.

Finally I was almost at the campfire, running and breathing hard. Everyone looked up as I burst out of the trees all bloodied and scratched up, and stared at me.

“There...is...a...dead body in the woods,” I said half out of breath. “and...and...the Screecher is coming after me.”

I stopped to catch my breath as everyone burst out laughing.

“Hey Philip, you better go back in there and get your shirt, before the Screecher starts wearing it,” said one boy jokingly.

“No, you don’t understand, there *REALLY* is a dead body out there,” I said. “I couldn’t see it, but I could feel it.”

“Sure, Philip,” said another Scout, giggling “and I’ll bet it’s a dead pirate and we can all feel around for his buried treasure.”

Everyone joined in for another hearty laugh at my expense.

I was shocked at their lack of understanding and empathy. I was defeated. It was no use trying to argue with them. I kept looking back at the trees to see if anything would come out as I walked to my tent to get another shirt on. When I was done, I sat by the fire, listening to the sounds in the woods. Was this all my imagination? Was there really a body in the woods? Was the Screecher really after me? Tomorrow during the day I

would go back into those woods and prove to everyone there really *was* a dead body out there.

After a night full of dreams about ghosts and goblins, I woke up in a cold sweat, got dressed, and had breakfast. I convinced two of the boys to go with me to search for the body. I carried my hatchet and knife for protection in case the Screecher was still feeding on the meat. I paced my way back in the direction I had gone the night before. As I got close to ninety paces, I saw my shirt on the ground.

"Here's my shirt," I announced. "The dead body has to be here somewhere."

We looked around for a few minutes. I saw where the leaves and dirt had been moved away as if something was dragged from this spot recently.

"See, right here, this is where the body was when I tripped over it. The Screecher must have dragged it off somewhere to eat it."

I tried to convince the other two boys, but they just laughed at me, saying it was all just my imagination.

"Let's go back to the campsite, John, and finish whittling our walking sticks," said Fred as they both started walking away. I stood still and looked around for a moment. As I was about to turn back to the campsite, I looked down one more time and saw it – an old shoe on the ground half buried in dirt, but there was nothing inside the shoe, such as a rotten human foot. It was only a dirty old shoe.

Because of the shoe, I was convinced now there had been a body here last night, but who would believe me? I knew something had dragged it off leaving this shoe behind.

I looked down again at the dirt around the shoe. I moved a few leaves around, looking for evidence of the corpse. Part of me hoped there wouldn't be anything else, but I had to know for sure, even if it left me horrified for the rest of my life.

Suddenly, there it was, next to the shoe in the soft dirt, large and menacing. A footprint – no, a *claw* print. The

biggest darn claw print I had ever seen in my entire life. It had to be the print of a giant cat or a lion-type beast.

It had to be the Screecher, I thought.

I had fooled it last night.

I ran back to the campsite grateful to be alive.

ATTACK OF THE GIANT ARMY WORMS

In the late 1970s there was an unusually large infestation of the Gypsy Moth caterpillar where I grew up. The caterpillar, or "Army Worm," caused major damage to the farming crops and the trees in the area. It was a little scary seeing so many of these worms covering roadways, houses, trees, and vehicles. These pests could rapidly defoliate trees in a matter of days. It was not unusual to hear humming noises when they were eating. Roads became slick and slimy when they were crushed by traffic. There was no place a person could go outside to avoid these little pests. While camping, we had to zip up our tents nice and tight or else they would find a way in at night and crawl all over our bodies while we slept. One time I saw an Army Worm wiggle its way out of a Scoutmaster's beard as he was talking to me. It was from these experiences the story of the Attack of the Giant Army Worms was hatched...

In the spring of 1976 the infectious Tent Caterpillar, sometimes called the Gypsy Moth Caterpillar, or "Army Worm," invaded northern Maine with such devastating force that nearly every deciduous tree in Aroostook County was defoliated. Not only did these bugs wipe out the forests, but they also completely ravaged the potato crop, the staple of the land, and the livelihood of many local farmers for generations.

Now, to better understand the nature of the problem, it is important to look at the evolutionary process of the hairy little beast. The Gypsy Moth develops the same way as native moths. The male and female mate in the late summer, and by fall, the female will lay egg masses in tree branches and shrubs. The eggs lie dormant through the winter months until late April, or early May, when nature's refrigerator gets unplugged and thaws them out enough to trigger the hatching process. Then, one by one, the Army Worms march out of their egg sacs.

These worms are about three inches long, half inch in wide, light green and black in color with tiny blue and red spots on their backs, and hundreds of little legs to transport them around. There are hundreds of short tiny hairs on their bodies that tickle the back of your neck when you least suspect it.

They are called Army Worms because of how they march around in large colonies, similar to military regiments, as they search for food. Sometimes the fields come alive with movement from these hairy pests as millions of them feed on the green potato tops spread out in rows.

When they are not feeding on the potato greens, they are eating the leaves of oak, maple, and poplar trees. Some will take breaks from feasting long enough to spin silk webs in fancy white “tents” which they’ll wrap themselves in later for protection; hence the nickname, “Tent Caterpillar.”

When the trees are full of these caterpillars there is an unmistakable “humming” sound as thousands of tiny bites are being taken. Anyone standing underneath one of these “humming trees” will notice a slight dusting of leaf fragments and worm excrement falling down, and woe to the guy who accidentally bumps it as hundreds of these creepy crawly bugs will instantly fall on his head.

In its final stages of development the worm is called the Gypsy Moth. The insect is native to Europe and Asia and was first introduced into this country around the mid 1880’s in a failed effort to make inexpensive silk. As a foreign transplant, these bugs critically altered the natural order of things in northern Maine and elsewhere. The native birds and animals refused to feed on the hairy worm, and who could blame them? They appeared too disgusting to eat.

Additionally, the harsh northern Maine winters didn’t bother the eggs laid by the female moths, and the pesticides and insecticides the farmers were using in the spring didn’t appear to harm them.

So, without a natural or manmade way to get rid of these creatures, they began to multiply exponentially: 2 became 4, 4 became 8, 8 became 16, 16 became 32, 32 became 64, and so on, until their numbers were staggering. Initially there were not a lot of them, so they did not cause a lot of widespread damage. However, that all changed when their numbers

increased dramatically in 1977 – and there was no stopping them.

It was the spring of that year when the pesky bugs came back in force, causing more damage than in previous years. Several of the largest farmers in the area, Dollen, Lockhart, and Buday, decided it was time to do something about this epidemic which was seriously interfering with their ability to make a living. These farmers were very resourceful and had been using a homemade brew of pesticides for many years that worked wonders in getting rid of just about every harmful bug they knew – that is, except for the Gypsy Moth caterpillar.

In October 1977, the three farmers got together after a dismal year of tater production to concoct their own new pesticide from available chemicals on the market. They had some working knowledge of how the various chemicals worked, and by the end of the winter, they were quite satisfied they had produced a pesticide which would wipe out all these Army Worms for good.

In April 1978 the three farmers loaded up their crop dusters and began spraying their new product on their fields. As they had predicted, the new pesticide did not damage their crops, or the natural habitat of the birds and animals. However, it did not appear to have any effect on the Gypsy Moth Caterpillar either, and as a result, the farmers had another miserable year of production.

In October 1978, Dollen, Lockhart, and Buday petitioned the US Department of Agriculture for help. Their request was one of hundreds the government received from all over the country. The farming industry was in peril and something had to be done as soon as possible. The government knew they had limited time to develop a pesticide which would work, or else the farmers would continue to lose their crops and go bankrupt.

So the scientists worked frantically on testing new chemicals that would work on the harmful bugs, but not do

any damage to the crops, forest, and natural wildlife. By April 1979, the government had developed a new pesticide known as *Bacillus Enlargus*.

However, the government made a dreadful error. *Bacillus Enlargus* was tested on the Gypsy Moth caterpillars already stored in frozen suspension in the government laboratories, but not on the unique northern Maine Gypsy Moth caterpillar. These caterpillars were different because they had mutated as a result of the farmers' failed "home brew" the year before. The laboratory moths had a different molecular structure. *Bacillus Enlargus* worked wonderfully on the lab moths, but not on the mutated moths.

Bacillus Enlargus was a revolutionary new pesticide, designed to simply invade the bug's membrane and spread quickly through the body, and within hours of penetration, cause the bug's body to enlarge and explode violently, killing it.

The Department of Agriculture shipped boxes of *Bacillus Enlargus* to the farmers in May 1979 just after the first eggs were hatched. The farmers, anxious to use the chemical before the ravaging worms caused too much devastation, immediately loaded up crop dusters and waited for early evening.

Just before dusk, the farmers completed the spraying just as the sun was setting. They knew it was always best to wait until just before sundown when the air was calmer to unload their pesticides on the potatoes. They returned home for the evening, confident this would be the best harvest ever, and went to bed.

Later that night, as expected, there was a massive symphony of popping sounds that could be heard for miles around. All the insects and bugs which were harmful to the crops exploded and died; that is, all but the Gypsy Moth caterpillar. The physiological make up of the Maine bug was highly advanced and sophisticated. This caterpillar was not

only *resistant* to the new pesticide, but it was actually *enhanced* by it. When *Bacillus Enlargus* entered the body of this new breed of caterpillar, it multiplied the gene responsible for the bug's size, causing rapid growth, but without an explosion.

Within a few hours of the crop dusting, these little Army Worms had become twenty times their original size, rivaling the biggest known Chihuahua. They soon made their way through the potato crops, eating the greens, and sliding their fat round hairy bodies through the nicely tended rows. They had devastated much of the plants by sunup, and by early morning, the giant creatures were making their way off the devoured fields and into the little town of Mapleton looking for more food.

I woke up to the sound of my mother screaming. Outside it sounded like a helicopter had landed, its blades whipping through the air like a million humming birds beating their wings.

I ran downstairs in my underwear. My dad was loading the 12 gauge shotgun. My mother was in the bedroom yelling, "Get rid of them!" My two younger sisters, Susan, 11, and Mary Ann, 12, were standing next to her on the verge of tears. My 5-year-old brother, Will, was standing on a stool by the kitchen sink looking out the window at our driveway, his jaw dropped open in utter disbelief.

"What are those things?" he asked incredulously. "Where did they come from? They are so ugly!"

No one answered him. The others were watching my dad loading his shotgun.

"Be careful out there," warned my mother as he slipped his shoes on with his gun under the crook of his arm.

What was going on here? I wondered. *Are we being attacked by someone?*

I did not realize until a few moments later that *someone* was actually a *something*.

“Dad, what are you doing?” I asked.

“Don’t go outside. They’re everywhere,” he replied.

“What’s outside? What’s everywhere?” I continued.

Without saying anything more, he flipped the double barrels into position and cocked back both hammers. I ran to the kitchen window next to Will just as some hairy creature with tiny legs began slithering up the pane leaving a big slimy glob of mucus in its wake.

“Ugh, yuck, mom, look at it,” said Will as he jumped off the stool and pointed at the window.

My mother looked up and yelled, “Oh my God, there’s one on the window! They’re trying to get into the house. What if they get inside? What are we going to do?”

My brothers, Larry, 14, and Donald, 12, were both getting their shoes on to go outside. I quickly did the same. None of us boys were going to let our Dad go outside to fight these creatures alone, regardless of the danger. After all, staying behind would certainly mean cowardice in front of our sisters.

My dad walked through the kitchen, pushed open the screen door, and walked onto the back porch. I followed right behind with Larry and Donald at my heels. My dad stood at the end of the porch next to the steps. As I approached, I could see he had something lined up in his gun sights. Then he fired a shot into the back yard. The gun made a loud retort which made me jump. I looked past his shoulder and saw that the blast had found its mark. The giant caterpillar had been torn in two. Green and white slime covered the ground in globs where it had blown apart. Both halves were wiggling on the ground trying to recover from the dissection.

I looked around in the yard and saw hundreds of the giant worms marching like armies across the roadway in front of our house like armies. They were moving on their short hairy legs, arching their bodies like inchworms, as they covered the ground one foot at a time. Some were slithering up trees on

our lawn. I could hear branches rustling as many were chewing leaves with their tiny sharp teeth.

“Dad, you got it!” exclaimed Larry jubilantly. “Look, there are hundreds more!”

“They’re giant Army Worms!” I yelled. “How did they get so big?”

In the backyard I saw the creatures marching across our lawn in a massive green army, the ground rolling like a green ocean wave. The leaves in our trees were twitching and humming with their feeding. Tiny bits of leaves and branches drifted down to the ground under the chewing noise. One side of the house had a dozen or more of the hideous creatures slithering up the siding.

My dad aimed at another one in the driveway and blasted it, knocking the giant bug back about five feet, and splattering the remains against our white car. I made a mental note to use the other door the next time we drove anywhere.

It became painfully obvious we were not going to have enough ammunition to kill all these creatures that were numbering in the thousands.

“Dad, what are we going to do?” I asked.

He was silent for a moment, deep in thought. We waited for his answer, hoping it would be a good one.

“Somehow, these Army Worms have enlarged,” he finally replied. “We are never going to kill them all with this shotgun. I’m thinking if these things are just bigger versions of the smaller ones, they will not harm us. At least I don’t *think* they will harm us. Our main job will be to keep them out of our house until somebody finds a way to get rid of them.”

As an exclamation point, he drew back his foot and drop kicked one of the worms like a football player attempting a field goal. The worm soared through the air in a furry heap and landed twenty feet away on its back. It wiggled and struggled for a moment, flipped over, and then began crawling in a new direction, seemingly unharmed.

“Let’s get inside,” directed my dad. “We need to make some plans.”

We followed him in through the front door. My mom and sisters were looking out the window at the creatures as we entered the kitchen.

“We need to all stay inside,” said my dad. “As long as the windows and doors are shut we should be all right.”

“What are we going to do?” asked my mom, her voice trembling as she placed her arms around both of my sisters who were on the verge of tears.

“We are going to keep those things out of here and wait for someone to tell us what to do next,” my dad replied. “Turn on the TV and let’s see if there is anything on the news about it.”

I hurried over to the TV set and pushed the power button. Right away there was a video on the screen of the worms making their way across Main Street in Mapleton. Another picture showed the elementary school covered in a large green moving patch. Yet another picture showed a car nearly buried completely underneath them. A newsman’s voice was reporting on the pictures we were seeing:

NEWSMAN STAN CORMAN: Something terrible has happened in the little town of Mapleton. Last night as everyone slept these freaks of nature appeared. They are now running rampant, causing panic throughout this peaceful farming community. People are afraid to come out of their homes. Gun shots can be heard constantly from around the neighborhood. It doesn’t appear anyone has been hurt by these giant worms as far as we know. The Department of Defense has been contacted in the event this monstrosity is the result of biological or chemical warfare. It is our understanding that the Centers For Disease Control is sending someone here to test for any contamination or otherwise problematic diseases these creatures may be carrying which could be harmful to humans.

I heard him say “diseases” and worried we might all get infected and die.

I continued to watch as the same reporter was wearing white gloves and a face mask. He was interviewing an elderly man holding a sawed off shotgun I recognized as Peter Brown, a longtime resident of Mapleton who lived on the Hughes Road. Peter was a temperamental kind of guy who lived alone and feuded with his neighbors all the time about the most trivial things. According to the most reliable rumors around town, he liked to collect guns and had a whole house full of them. Whenever he took to the booze, he enjoyed firing off shots in the air for fun. Peter began talking to the newsman.

PETER BROWN: I is never seen nuttin' like this in my entire life, let me tell you sonny boy. These slimy no good for nuttin' snakes are everywhere. When I gets up this morning and sees them I starts a-blasting away, yes siree I did. I'll be damned if I'm gonna let any of those varmint critters get into MY house. The second they is within a few feet of my front door I is a-gonna give them some buckshot in the (BEEP). If I make a direct hit, I can slice them right in two. They'll (BEEP) their pants, sure 'nough. They'll wiggle for awhile, but in a few minutes, they'll just lay there deader than a doornail. I've been piling them over yonder in the field (points in the distance). I reckon I can torch these (BEEP) (BEEP) (BEEP) (BEEP) later this evening when I get a good pile of 'em.'
NEWSMAN STAN CORMAN: Ah...well...ah, Peter, I couldn't have said it better myself. (Looking at the camera) This is reporter Stan Corman with WEGM-TV News in Presque Isle, reporting live on the scene in Mapleton. Okay, back to you at the studio Mike.

The camera pans over to a spot where the old man had piled about twenty or thirty of the worms in a large heap before returning to Mike, the WAGM anchorman. A pair of work gloves and a pitch fork lay on the ground next to the

stack. The anchorman finished the segment with some words of caution.

ANCHORMAN MIKE DALLAS: I would caution everyone out there listening to stay inside. This man, Peter, knows the warnings, but has chosen to wage his own personal war on the Army Worms. We would reiterate our earlier concerns: do NOT take matters into your own hands. As we have been reporting over the last hour or two, residents should remain indoors and away from these creatures.

After watching the news awhile, I followed my dad from room to room making sure all our windows and doors were closed and latched tight on the main floor. When this was completed, we did the same thing upstairs. When we got to the basement, we realized we had a problem. Two of the creatures had managed to get in and were crawling around on the cement floor with their heads moving left and right looking for food. I remembered that we had thrown a bunch of firewood in through the basement window last weekend and forgot to shut it completely, allowing the worms to crawl in. A third worm was half way through the window, dangling down about to fall to the floor.

“Quick, grab a stick and stab them,” my dad directed. “Don’t smash them because their guts and innards will fly everywhere. We don’t want to be exposed to any danger from their mess.”

I saw a broom leaning against the stairway. I grabbed it and walked toward the worm stuck in the window as my dad was stabbing the other two on the floor with a steel fireplace poker. Holding the broom handle like a spear, I forcefully jabbed it through the midsection. The dull end of the broom drove its way easily through the soft tissue, reappearing on the other side all gooey and green. I pushed the impaled worm back through the opening, closed the window down until it hit the broom handle, and then pulled the stick back to release the

worm like a chunk of ham from a Shish Kabob. Then I threw the slimy wet stick on the floor.

Afterwards, I watched the other two worms wreathing in pain on the floor as my dad stood triumphantly nearby with his sharp poker in hand. After several minutes the two worms stopped wiggling, green slime still oozing from their bodies. The smell was offensive and almost overpowering. We had to get out of there right away or pass out from the gathering fumes. We went upstairs to the living room to wait for any news about the giant army worm epidemic.

For much of the day we watched the creatures crawling around our front and backyard, up our trees, barn, and house. At times I poked a few of them off the house using my Louisville Slugger through the open bedroom window, but mostly I sat in the living room watching local and national TV reports. Scientists from around the country were being interviewed about their opinion as to the outbreak and what might be going on. No one seemed to know what was going on other than loose speculation the Russians had something to do with it.

By evening, even though we were all feeling quite uneasy about the whole situation, we knew we had to get some rest. So, with the house locked up tight, we all hit the hay for a restless night of sleep.

The next day turned out to be more of the same. However, there were fewer worms in our yard because much of their food was gone. The trees and bushes were almost completely bare. Some of the worms were eating leftover leaf “crumbs” which had fallen to the ground after the devastating defoliation and massacre of the tree tops. There were still some climbing our house and garage. The country road in front of our property was green and brown from worms being squished and splattered by oncoming traffic.

We continued to watch the news as it developed. One scientist was being interviewed by national anchorman, Wayne O'Connor:

SCIENTIST EDWARD FOSTER: The European or Asian Gypsy Moth is an exotic insect with a voracious appetite first introduced into the northeastern part of the United States in 1869 as an inexpensive source of silk. By 1889 it began to cause major damage to the forests in that area. By the 1970s, it had reached an epidemic level, stretching out almost entirely across the country westward to the Rocky Mountains.

The caterpillars live in colonies, usually in the trees, where they spin webs of silk to use as a protective barrier against predators. The silk webs can be found in the trees and shrubs, on houses and outbuildings, and other upright objects. The webs are quite a nuisance to homeowners who are constantly cleaning their property of the silk strands. The worms crawl in and out of this web in search of food, and no broadleaf tree is safe from their ravaging.

In late June or early July the larva will stop feeding and enter the cocoon stage. When they emerge from their shell in five weeks the males and females will mate. A few months later, the females lay masses which lie dormant throughout the winter months, until early spring when the ground has thawed, and the eggs hatch, up to 1000 per mass, starting the whole cycle over again.

After watching the news for awhile with nothing else to do, I was starting to get bored and decided to ask my dad for a reprieve from our in-home prison sentence.

"Dad, we can't stay cooped up in this house all day again," I said. "There aren't as many of them outside anymore. Can't we go out now?"

My dad was silent for a moment as he sat in his favorite chair in the living room watching the newscast. He took a deep breath, and said, "If you promise me you will not touch

any of those worms you can go outside for awhile, but I don't want you to go beyond our property line, understand?"

"Understood," I replied.

My brothers also agreed and we told him we would be careful. I knew my younger two brothers were dying to ride their new bikes they just got this past Easter. For the last three or four weeks they were constantly zipping around our circle driveway, practicing wheelies, and skidding out on their brakes. I was sure they would be hopping on their bikes the minute we exited the front door.

When we got outside, we looked for the two bikes as dozens of the creatures were crossing from the roadway to our front yard. Donald found his bike in the garage, pulled it out, and closed the door behind him. Larry was searching for his bike around the back of the garage, but was having trouble finding it. While he was looking, I grabbed a pitchfork with long sharp tines that was leaning against the wall inside the garage. I planned on hunting down as many of these worms as I could and making my own pile of dead bodies like old man Peter on Hughes Road.

As I was poised to get my first hairy victim, I saw Larry run over to one of the young oak trees on the front of our property. I noticed his bike was leaning against the tree almost out of view. He appeared happy to have found it. Soon he would be joining Donald who was already riding circles around our house.

As he approached the bike, he stopped and exclaimed, "What is this stuff all over my bike?"

He was looking at something too far away for me to see what he was talking about.

"Look at what those darn worms did to it!" he continued.

I was curious about this last remark so I ran over to him. As I approached, I saw him kick his bike *really* hard. He was obviously very mad about something and I wasn't close enough yet to see what had caused his frustration. His foot

landed squarely on back wheel of the upright bike knocking it against the base of the tree. A second later, a hairy green bug fell right on top of his head.

I sucked in my breath as hard as I could and stared in horror as the giant worm perched on Larry's head like an ugly coonskin hat. I watched him frantically grab it with both hands and fling it into the air about ten feet away where it landed with a thud. He screamed and howled as he ran his fingers through his hair trying to get rid of the leftover mess from the creature. He was dancing around on his feet like he was barefoot on hot coals yelling, "It got me! It got me! That stinking dirty worm got me! I can't get this shit out of my hair! Help!"

I was next to him in a second looking at his head. There was mucus dripping out of his hair and down his face.

"Come on, we need to get inside," I told him.

At about this time my dad came rushing out of the house. He grabbed Larry and asked if he was all right. Then he took him inside, telling Donald and me to follow. I was about to do so when I saw the slimy worm on the ground that had tried to chew on my brother's scalp. I walked over to the slithering bug with my pitchfork, raised the weapon up high, and said, "Okay, fur-head, eat this!" and I brought it down hard on the creature, pinning it to the ground. I left it there, stuck writhing in the tines, and went inside.

As I entered the front door, my mom was cleaning up Larry's head and face at the kitchen sink. I watched as she carefully looked him over for any wounds. Fortunately the creature was only on Larry's head for a split second and didn't do any damage other than sliming him a good one.

I began to get angry. How dare these oversized fur balls come to my house and cause so much fear that we couldn't even go outside and play. I didn't want to sit by the TV and listen to any more special reports from scientists who thought they knew how ways to get rid of these bugs. I was ready to

start my own personal war against the beasts and I pleaded with my parents to let me go back outside. I was the oldest boy in the family and they knew I could be trusted.

"I don't know if it is really safe out there," said my dad. "Look what happened to your brother. Why do you want to go out there anyway? In a few days the scientists will be studying these worms to find out how to kill them. Until then, I would rather you stay inside."

"But Mom, that could take weeks, or even months," I said. "We can't stay inside *that* long. I just need to go out there and start killing those things."

My dad heard the conviction in my voice and knew how important this was for me.

"Okay, but don't touch any of those things," he said.

"I won't," I promised.

I put on some work boots and a pair of potato picking gloves and headed out the door. I thought about what tool I would use to kill the creatures. I remembered when the worms are completely severed they die within minutes. I went around to the backyard where the wood pile is located and removed the double bladed axe that was buried in the chopping block.

This sharp little tool should work just fine, hee hee, I thought playfully.

I walked to the road in front of our house where the creatures were crossing. I was starting to get used to the steady humming sounds as they fed in the distant trees and brush. I knew that if I really wanted to start a war I could just walk down to the woods and start picking them off left and right with my Remington semi-automatic .22-gauge rifle, but I had promised my parents I wouldn't leave the property.

So I waited along the roadside until each worm crossed and brought my axe down on each one. The other worms didn't sense the danger as each one felt the bite of my guillotine. I had to be careful not to get hit by any backslash as my axe sliced each one in two.

I must have killed a hundred of them in this manner, and my arms were getting tired from swinging the heavy blade repeatedly over the past twenty minutes, so I took a break. I wanted to check out the potato field on the other side of the road where they were coming from, so I took several steps on the blacktop and quickly lost my footing on the wet gooey surface, forgetting that the road was slippery with their oozing fluids. The axe flew from my hands and landed several feet away as my feet flew out from under me. My whole body slid several feet on the road surface before coming to a stop.

I stood up and shook my whole body like a wet dog after a summer bath, and yelled, "Crap!"

How stupid of me, I thought. How could I have done this?

I stepped off the road and headed to the house. I was looking at my arms and legs covered in the green-brown goop, not paying much attention to where I was going, and got too close to one of my mom's lilac bushes and walked right into a large silk web. Immediately the web broke and wrapped itself around my body, clinging like glue to my slimy clothing. Several of the worms that were hanging in the web became entangled within the mummy of silk. I could feel the short stubby legs of one of the creatures walking up my back on tiny suction cups, his head moving from side to side searching for food.

I dropped to the ground on my back and started banging the worm violently on the ground like a sumo wrestler trying to pin an opponent. Over and over again I slammed the creature down, squishing it flat like a green hairy pancake. Then I began to claw at the silk strands stuck to my face and clothes. The more I clawed, the more entangled I became, as the silk just clung to the goop on my clothes and hands.

Just then I felt something move between my feet. I looked down and saw a long hairy bug crawling upwards. I was horrorstruck. I immediately kicked it, and managed to knock it end-over-end away from me. I wasn't about to let the

munching beast take a bite out of my crotch. It remained there on its back wiggling its legs helplessly in the air.

It was then my dad hurried over.

“What happened?” he asked.

“I can’t believe I was such an idiot,” I said disgustingly. “I ran right into one of their tents. Ugh! What a mess.”

I stood up holding my arms out like a white slimy scarecrow. I glanced on the ground next to my dad and saw the garden hose. I reached down and picked it up.

“Maybe I can spray this crap off,” I said.

I pointed the nozzle on my lower legs and began spraying. The silk strands started coming off in clumps. I grabbed the silk and rolled it up in my hands like snowballs and threw them on the ground. The worm that had been near my crotch was several feet away from me still on its back. I aimed the nozzle and began spraying it triumphantly. I soaked it for a good half a minute and noticed something peculiar happening. The creature was making a hissing sound. Thin strains of smoke rose up from its body. It pulsated, swelled, and glowed for several seconds. As I watched transfixed, the radiating creature seemed to reach a crescendo and then explode right in front of my face, sending green and yellow scum in all directions. I did not have time to shield myself from the spew that came in large wet globs.

Water kills them, I thought.

I was confused. Water never bothered these hairy bugs before when they were smaller, so why now? I thought about this for a moment as I made my way inside the house to clean off.

“Dad, did you see what happened to that worm when I sprayed it with water. It swelled right up and exploded. All we have to do is –”

“–are you alright?” my mom interrupted as I walked through the door.

“Yes, well, I think so,” I told her. “I had one of the worms on my back and I squished it flat, but I got the innards all over me. Another one splattered me when it exploded.”

“Come here and let me take a look,” she said.

“Oh, Mom, I’m all right, really.”

“Come here,” she insisted.

She carefully looked at my face and neck.

“I hope to God those things didn’t poison you,” she said in a worried voice. “Now go upstairs and clean up and then we’re taking you straight to the doctor.”

“Mom, I don’t need a doctor,” I insisted.

“Make sure you run the water nice and hot,” said Mom. “Use plenty of soap. We’ll talk about doctor or no doctor when you come back downstairs.”

I went to the bathroom where I stripped down and soaked in the tub for a short time. Then I scrubbed myself thoroughly with soap.

Water kills them, I pondered.

Suddenly it hit me like a ton of worms. It made perfect sense.

I jumped out of the tub, threw on some clean clothes, and raced downstairs. I flipped through the phone book and found the number to WEGM-TV in Presque Isle and dialed the number, but got a busy signal. A few minutes later I tried again and got through.

“This is Philip Dickinson calling from Mapleton. I know how to kill all these giant Army Worms in a matter of minutes.”

“You do, huh?” asked the man on the other end. “How old are you, son?”

“I am 16 years old, and I am *NOT* making this up.”

“Well, you’ve got to understand we’ve been getting a lot of crank calls on this situation. Some people believe that the end of the world is near. Others say, ‘bring on the military action’ – you know, bring in the tanks and guns and start shooting up

the area. One guy even called to say he believes every person should evacuate right now so the place can be nuked. Imagine that, nuking our own country, ha, ha. What will they think of next? There are some real nut cases out there. So how do I know that you're not one of them?"

He thinks I'm one of those goofballs trying to get a story on the air. I realized they were probably getting a lot of calls regarding this situation, but I knew I was right. I just had to convince them.

"Okay, I'll prove it to you."

"Listen. There are a lot of scientists working on this problem. Why don't you just let them do their job, okay?"

"Yeah, I know, but those scientists will be running tests that will take days, weeks, or even months. I have a solution that will work right now."

The reporter asked a few more questions. He couldn't promise to send a camera crew, but he did promise to share the information with the studio manager, and then hung up.

Within an hour the WEGM-TV van from Presque Isle pulled into my driveway, crushing several of the worms as they entered. Stan Corman, wearing his heavy duty face mask, got out of the van with his cameraman right behind him. I came outside with my dad, Larry and Donald.

"Which one of you is Philip?" asked Reporter Corman in a slightly muffled voice as he spoke through his mask.

"I am," I replied.

"You say you know how to kill all these giant worms?"

"Yes I do."

"Is this a hoax? We know these things can be killed quite easily one at a time, but how do you kill them all at once? There must be millions of them out there. By the end of the week they will have invaded all these adjoining towns and cities. Our country is in a real crisis. So, what is your solution?"

"I will show you."

I walked over to the garden hose, grabbed the nozzle off the grass, and pointed it at one of the hairy slithering slugs climbing a nearby tree.

“Stand back,” I directed.

I squeezed the trigger and began soaking the critter with a jet spray of cold spring water from our well. In less than a minute the hairy body began to pulsate and shake. It radiated a soft light from the intense inner heat. Then the creature dropped to the ground like a blood leech doused with table salt. It quickly bloated up and began to steam. For just a moment it appeared to be frozen in size, like a balloon at full capacity, but then with one high pitched popping noise, the creature exploded, sending globs of worm parts and innards everywhere.

“You see, that stream of water killed it with no problem whatsoever. Imagine what the next heavy downpour will do to all of them.”

Stan immediately understood, and said, “Let’s set up our cameras so we can go live for your demonstration.”

Stan’s assistant mounted the video camera on a tall tripod. He gave Stan the “thumbs up” signal and began rolling the tape. I found out later my mother, two sisters, and my brother Will were watching the live report on the TV in our living room.

REPORTER STAN CORMAN: We are reporting live at the Dickinson home on the Pulcifer Road in Mapleton where these giant army worms have swarmed in from the potato fields as they make their way to nearby trees (camera pans slowly left and right showing the potato field and then the roadway covered with the slithering bugs. Then it shows a close-up of the shaking trees in the nearby woods being assaulted by the creatures).

We are with 16-year-old Philip Dickinson who has learned something about the worms that even the scientists haven’t yet figured out. Philip, can you tell us about your discovery?

PHILIP: Well, earlier today I was outside chopping up these giant worms with my axe. I'm pretty good with my axe. I even got the Totin' Chip award at Scout camp last summer. Anyway, after I sliced up about a hundred of them, I accidentally slipped and fell. I was covered in worm slime from head to toe. Then I got stuck in one of their silk tents. One of them almost bit me in the crotch, so I grabbed the garden hose and started spraying it. That's when I discovered how to kill all of them.

REPORTER STAN CORMAN: Do you want to show our audience what you are talking about?

PHILIP: Sure.

I walked up to almost a dozen of the worms near the roadway with my garden hose in hand. The cameraman and reporter Stan were right behind me. I started spraying the whole lot of them as fast as I could, drenching each one until they were all pulsating and smoking with a weird amber glow. Soon all of the worms reached their swelling point and exploded. Some burst apart simultaneously and others in quick succession. The green splash flew ten to fifteen feet away just short of our feet. One of the larger worms actually swelled larger than expected. I shielded my face from the oncoming projectile which flew past me and hit the cameraman and his lens. I heard him cuss accidentally on live TV. Then he proceeded to wipe his lens with his handkerchief. Stan saw what happened and quickly announced they would be taking a short intermission and would return in a few minutes with more details.

Following my discovery, the scientists confirmed that water, combined with the chemicals in the mutated worm's genetic makeup, caused a biological combustion which resulted in a violent explosion. The WEGM-TV weatherman, Storm Davis, predicted rain just after midnight with more than two inches of precipitation by morning. Based on expert opinion, people were urged to stay indoors during the rain as it

was likely to be an incredibly violent explosion of worms bursting and splattering in the rain. After the rain, residents were instructed to rake the hairy corpses into large piles and burn them.

As for me, I wasn't about to go to bed. I wanted to see the fireworks.

SUSAN B. EVERLING

This story still haunts me today. Every time I cough or have a fever I think about Susan B. Everling walking with me that day in the woods, and then I start getting goosebumps...

It was my birthday, July 29, 1978, and I was 16 years old. I was camping with eight other Boy Scouts for the weekend at our Scoutmaster Richard Turner's cabin near Oxbow, Maine. Along with camping we would be fishing – a whole lot of fishing.

You see, Richard's cabin was located on a "tote" road which is restricted to logging trucks traveling through the forest where they were harvesting timber. There were very few private cabins left in this forest. Richard's cabin was there long before the land was bought by these huge logging corporations like Great Northern Paper and Pinkham Lumber Company. They allowed the camp owners to keep their properties, but no one else could build on the land. Richard's cabin is one of the last ones allowed to remain.

The cabin was located along the magnificent Aroostook River in prime hunting and fishing territory. It's location in pristine wilderness was the envy of many fishermen and hunters. There was no electricity at the camp and the place was heated with a gas heater which also ran the cooking stove. There was a hand pump that had to be primed each day with river water to get running water for drinking and cooking.

I had been to the cabin many times in the past. Richard always enjoyed bringing the Scouts to the cabin to practice our camping skills. It was fun to set up our rustic sleeping shelters knowing he was close by if we needed help. I felt independent and well equipped to take care of myself in any situation.

I got up that Saturday morning feeling great. I thought about the little credo on Richard's kitchen wall: "Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man, healthy, and wise." I felt I had all three of those things that day. I scrambled out of the lean-to shelter I had made and walked toward the cabin. My fishing

pole was leaning against a tree with my old rusty tackle box and wooden fish basket. Other boys were already up and around. We all helped Richard make breakfast. After we ate, Richard surprised me with a cake and a brand new tackle box as a gift. I couldn't contain my excitement. I was ecstatic. It was the perfect gift for my perfect pastime. I would be using the new box that morning as I prepared to hit the stream fifty feet away.

I headed out the door with the other Scouts who were mostly younger than me. We grabbed our fishing equipment and spread ourselves out along the river in front of Richard's cabin all hoping to catch the big one that usually gets away.

The river was fairly wide – about 125 feet – and was slow moving and shallow. I pulled in a few small trout and enjoyed the fresh air and scenery. Every now and then I heard the low rumbling of a logging truck in the distance, but mostly all I heard were crows cawing and my line hitting the water with a soft “kerplunk” sound.

It was a warm summer morning and the perfect time to be in the great out-of-doors enjoying all of God's wonderful creations. I felt right at home here. I was a Boy Scout and I had advanced through the ranks to the level of Star. I was prepared for anything that might happen to me in the woods. I had my pockets full of matches, rope, a compass, snack food, and a canteen full of water. In the event I got separated and lost from the others, I could use my training and supplies to survive in the wilderness.

Being older than the rest, I was more comfortable wandering further upstream to find that lucky fishing hole. I had hoped to find the right spot to catch a mess load of 20-inchers to bring back to the cabin and remain as humble as I could while the others gawked at my catch. I would be forever admired for my savvy ways as a fisherman.

With this thought in mind, I slowly walked upstream, following a beaten path as I went, stopping periodically to cast

my line in. About a quarter of a mile from camp, I found a perfect spot where the river ran fast and large pools of deep holes were everywhere. I fished for awhile, sometimes standing, but mostly sitting on the bank and chewing on some tall blades of grass I was plucking next to me. It was late morning and I needed to make my way back to the camp for lunch. I tossed my line in one more time hoping I might hit the jackpot with a big catch to take back with me.

As I set the tension in my reel, I heard a noise behind me. I turned my head and noticed a young girl of about 11 or 12 standing nearby looking at me. She was rather skinny with long straight brown hair and dark eyes. She wore an old fashioned summer dress which hung down to her knees looking as if it had been stitched up a few times with patches here and there. It was obvious she had been crying.

I was startled, nearly dropping my pole into the water, and quickly asked, "What are you doing here?"

The little girl sniffled and said, "I am trying to find my younger brother. Can you help me?"

"How did you get here?" I was still a little unnerved about the whole thing and how she had snuck up behind me so quietly. I didn't want to commit to helping her without understanding more about the situation she was in.

"What are you doing here in the woods?"

"I live not far from here with my parents and my brother, Paul," she said. "Paul is very sick. He must have walked into the woods. I can't find him. Can you help me?"

I could tell she was upset. I thought about getting help from Richard and the others back at camp, but this little girl's brother couldn't be that far away. She probably didn't want me to leave her alone to get help.

"Well, which way is your home?" I asked.

"Up this trail here," she said and pointed behind her.

"Well let's take a walk in that direction and maybe we can find your brother."

I reeled in my line and laid my pole on the ground next to my new tackle box and fish container. I made sure I had my canteen of water and other supplies.

I walked toward the girl and said, "Let me take a compass bearing so I can find my way back."

I dug out my compass and memorized the direction we would be taking – due east. I told her I was a Star rank Boy Scout and I knew how to find my way in these woods.

The little girl said, "My name is Susan. Susan Everling. But everyone calls me 'Susie B.' I am 12 years old."

I gave her my name and even volunteered it was my 16th birthday today. We walked the dirt trail calling her brother's name as we went. She appeared sad and not feeling well herself. She coughed every now and again.

She explained, "Paul's been running a high fever. Mama has been putting cold packs on his forehead for a few days now and feeding him soup. I just don't know why he took off like he did."

"We'll find him," I encouraged. "He couldn't have gone very far. I didn't know anyone else lived so close by to here. We've been camping at Oxbow for quite a while. I thought the other cabins in the area were farther away."

Susan coughed and said, "I've lived here my whole life. Mama and Papa take real good care of us. They say that Paul has the 'grippe' and it has made him very sick. Mama says he's got the 'hacking cough.' She's worried we're all going to catch it."

I wasn't worried about catching anything from the girl who was obviously coughing and not feeling well herself. I was pretty healthy and we were out in the fresh air. I was more concerned about finding her brother. I kept yelling Paul's name on both sides of the trail.

"Paul, where are you? Paul! Paul!"

I looked over at Susan. "Where are your parents right now? Do they know that Paul is missing?"

The little girl looked off into the trees. As she stared her eyes seemed distant. She said, "They left to gather fruit and special herbs to help make some soup for him. Paul must have left out the back door and down the trail to the river. I went looking for him. I don't know where he is."

She sounded hopeless and forlorn.

I looked through the trees for any movement or sound – anything that might help locate her brother. Soon we came to another trail that branched off from the main trail. A tall crooked birch tree seemed to mark the intersection.

Susan stopped and didn't say anything.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"I live up this way," she said slowly and mysteriously as she pointed a finger up the trail. "Come with me."

"Well, I think I need to go back for some help right now," I told her. "Why don't you go back home and try to find your parents and tell them what happened. I will find someone that can help back at the Turner's cabin."

"She coughed and repeated slowly, "Come with me."

I thought about her offer for a moment then said, "No, I think it would be best if I go back for help. You go on home and I will be back as soon as I can."

She repeated her request, "Come with me."

"Go home and find your parents," I insisted. "I will be right back."

At that point I turned around and started jogging back down the trail yelling, "I'll be right back."

She didn't say anything in return. I ran along the trail for about fifteen minutes until I got to the main tote road by the river and followed it to Richard's camp. I opened the door and burst through saying, "There is a little girl who lives up the road. She lost her little brother. We need to go help her."

The two leaders, Richard and Pete, and several Scouts were cooking lunch and looked up, surprised by my grand entrance and news.

“A little girl?” asked one of the boys. “Lost? Where?”

When we were here at camp we almost never had girls around. Camping was always a boy thing. So this was quite unusual to have a girl who needed help nearby.

Richard asked me some questions about her name and where I saw her. I explained everything to him including how I had walked her up a trail that led to her home and left her there.

He thought about this for a moment then said, “I don’t believe there are any cabins in that direction. The only cabins around here are on the downstream side of my camp. Are you sure it wasn’t downstream from here?”

“I am positive it was upstream,” I insisted. “She pointed to the trail leading to her home. I even used my trusty compass. It was definitely upstream.”

“Okay, I can’t imagine where she lives but we need to go find that girl,” Richard said emphatically. “That poor girl is probably lost in those woods somewhere. A couple of you boys come with us to look for her. The rest of you stay here and help Pete with lunch.”

So we trekked off along the tote road upstream until we got to the dirt trail leading off to the east and followed it. Along the way I couldn’t help but think maybe the girl had lied to me. Maybe she was with her family camping along the river and *SHE* was the one who was lost and disoriented from her sickness. Maybe there was no brother. As soon as we could locate her I would know the truth.

We continued to walk and look around. The two younger Scouts, Myles and Bryan, walked behind with Richard as I led the way to the spot where the crooked old birch tree marked the trail to her home.

“Here is where she lives, right down this way,” I said, coughing some myself. I pointed the way up the path where the young girl had left my company.

We followed the winding path through the woods for about 200 yards or so until we came to a small clearing. As we walked through the tall grasses I could see a large pile of rocks scattered about.

“Ah, yes,” remarked Richard with a smile on his face, “There was a home here at one time.” He pointed to the rocks. “It stood right there on that foundation. See how the rocks form a line? The cabin stood right here. You can see the remains of the chimney right there which was probably the back wall of the home.”

Coughing and kicking at the ground in front of me I began to look around, confused. This didn’t make any sense at all.

“Richard, maybe the girl’s house is nearby,” I suggested. “This might have been their old house which burned down and they built their new home somewhere else. We need to keep looking.”

“Well if I remember right, it seems to me there were a few log cabins here in the early 1900s, but a lot of those folks who lived in them took sick with the flu,” said Richard. “The bug was so contagious it was only a matter of hours for a person who had it to die from the high fever or the inability to breathe through their swollen throats. Sometimes they died from inability to breathe due to the swelling. Thank God we have medicine and vaccines now to help prevent another such epidemic.”

I disregarded what Richard was saying, still determined to find the girl now. I started walking around the field trying to decide which way to go. I looked past the scattered rocks toward the open field in back of the home. The two other Scouts were wandering around looking for Susan and calling her name.

Was that girl playing a joke on me, I wondered?

What an awful thing to do to someone. I was determined to find her and give her a piece of my mind.

I looked around, coughing a little again. I hacked up some phlegm in a wet ball and spit it on the ground several feet in front of me.

Darn itch in my throat all of a sudden, I thought. All this talking about the flu bug was starting to make me feel ill.

It was then I heard Scott yell, "Quick, come over here. I found something."

I started walking over with Richard right behind me. As I approached the two boys, I noticed they were standing by some rocks. I stopped and looked down. They were not rocks at all, but gravestones. There were four of them – two big ones and two little ones. They were leaning at different angles and were covered with tall grass and weeds.

Richard knelt down and bushed the front of the rocks with his hands and said, "This would be the family plot. It was common years ago to have family cemeteries near people's homes. You can't do it anymore, but you could back then. Why, this cemetery must be sixty or seventy years old."

I knelt down. Etched in the two big stones were the names "John" and "Mary," and the year, "1919." One of the smaller stones had the word, "Paul," and the date, "7-28-18." The last stone had the words, "Susie B," and the date, "7-29-18."

I coughed one more time before I fainted.

MONSTER WOODS

This one still sends shivers up and down my spine when I think back to that night in the woods...

*“Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day would quake to look on.”
- - Shakespeare, Hamlet [Act III, sc ii]*

Oh boy, this is going to be my lucky year. I'm finally going to get that big buck. I was 17 years old and it was the first day of hunting. I got up before dawn, grabbed my lunch and hunting gear, and drove off to a spot in West Chapman. I had seen a lot of deer tracks in the area the past few weeks when I was scouting around for a good place to hunt. My dad was encouraging about the sightings he'd seen as well.

I had hunted in different places in the past, but never had any luck getting my trophy deer. A few times I just wasn't quick enough to get a shot off before the buck disappeared, flipping its tail, and darting off into the brush. However, today would be different. I would spend the entire day tracking and scouting until I got one.

Just before sunrise, I drove to the spot next to the logging road leading into the woods. I grabbed my supplies by the light of my car, put on my blaze orange vest and hat, and loaded my .30-30 Winchester lever action rifle making sure the safety was on before beginning my walk.

I always borrowed the gun from my dad as my .22 semiautomatic would never kill a big deer. He didn't hunt as much with it anymore. It was the first real gun I had practiced on after I got my Hunter's Safety certificate at age 13. My dad warned me my best shot would have to be at less than 200 yards due to the velocity of the bullet. I knew this would be okay as I would mostly be in the brush instead of the open fields.

It was the first day of November and Old Man winter had yet to visit my hunting grounds. It could certainly happen any

day now with the brisk temperatures we had been getting. It would be nice to have some snow for tracking purposes and for following any blood trails if I happened to wound one.

As I walked I thought about the other kids my own age who were lucky enough to have shot their deer in the past. They often joked with me about my bad luck.

Are you going to be a vegetarian this year, Philip? Maybe you'll get a squirrel to eat.

I was determined this year I would show them who was the real hunter in the bunch.

I took a bearing on my compass before hitting the trail. It showed 270 degrees due west which would be easy to remember. I walked slowly and quietly along the trail, looking for signs of deer tracks, droppings, and rubbings. There were certainly lots of tracks around. I constantly checked the bearing on my compass to see where the trail was leading me.

I had hunted here once before with my dad and we had spooked a few when we were walking fast to get out of the woods before dark. At the time, we had pushed a little too long in the day and it was close to nightfall. We were a little confused by the lay of the land, the narrow overgrown trails we had taken, and the trouble we were having with my dad's cheap compass. He was a little frustrated and talked about buying a new one as soon as possible. We had never had this problem before. It was nearly dark and starting to rain a little and I was worried we would be stuck in the woods all night, lost and wet.

As we neared an unfamiliar grove of cedars, we were suddenly surprised when we spooked the biggest buck I have ever seen. It jumped up quickly and took off into the dense brush. We were so busy trying to find our way out of the woods we forgot about being prepared for such an event. Neither one of us had a chance to get a shot off. We just looked at each other and kept moving forward in the direction

of our vehicle. Fortunately, we made it out of the woods just before it got pitch black.

After that adventure last fall, there was something about seeing the big buck that kind of got into my blood a little. It weighed on my mind for a long time and I knew I had to come back and try it again. I came prepared with extra food and water, space blanket, flashlight, matches, rain gear, and a good compass. I also had some extra shells if I needed them. I didn't intend on getting lost, but I wasn't taking any chances. "Be Prepared" was the Boy Scout Motto, and I certainly knew a person could die in these woods if lost for a period of time without food, water, and shelter.

I started getting a little excited as I walked slowly up the path looking left and right for movement. I got to the top of the first ridge and sat down on a stump and looked around for about fifteen minutes. All was quiet except for an occasional squirrel running around in the tree branches. I remembered what my father had told me about hunting. If you sit more than you walk you were more likely to have the deer walk right up to you for a shot. Otherwise, the deer can hear you walking around or smell you.

So I took his advice and sat for a short time looking around. Soon my desire to see what was beyond the next bend in the road got the better of me, so I got up and walked some more. I did that for awhile, walked and sat, walked and sat, until it was about time for lunch time.

No deer this morning, I thought. This afternoon will be better.

After lunch I decided to get off the main trail. There was a path leading off to the south which appeared to go deeper into the woods and perhaps to a cedar swamp where the deer were hiding. I checked my compass for another bearing. I expected it to be right about 180 degrees due south. However, it read 120 degrees SE; closer to due east than to due south. I shrugged off the poor guess and made a mental note of the

bearing. Then I began walking down the narrow path into the woods, being careful to keep the noise to a minimum.

At about 2:00 p.m., I had reached the crest of a small hill when a loud whirring sound filled my ears.

Rat a tat a tat a tat a tat a tat a tat!

It was so close I thought it was going to hit me.

I flinched and looked to my right. A flock of twenty or more grouse had flown up into the air at the same time. They went a short distance and landed in some tree branches.

Man that was scary, I thought. It sounded like a helicopter taking off.

I remembered hearing just one grouse fly up in the past and how loud it had been, but that same sound now was multiplied twenty times by the flock.

Well if there are deer around here I'm sure they heard all the noise and ran away, I thought.

More determined than ever, I kept walking toward the swamps. I had about two hours to go before I needed to turn back. I stopped after about fifteen minutes to make sure I was on the same course and looked at my compass. I thought I was maintaining the same straight course at 120 degrees SW. However, the bearing showed 80 degrees NW. This was quite a bit different than the last one. I jiggled it a few times and tapped the compass with my finger, and then checked it again. It was still 80 degrees NW.

Now, how could that be? I wondered. Okay, either my compass is bad or my memory is bad.

I didn't have another compass so I began to mentally backtrack the turns I had taken so I could make my way back without any problems. I would have to get a different compass to take on my next hunting trip.

As I crested a small hill the buck was standing right in front of me, a big one, weighing 220 pounds or better, with a huge rack on his head. My heart raced as I lifted the gun to find my

target. At the same time, the buck flipped its tail and darted off into the dense brush.

Dang it! I thought.

I just needed one more second and the monster buck would have been mine. I wasn't able to get a shot off, but maybe it wasn't too late to get him. I hurried to the spot where it had entered the trees and stood quietly, hoping to see it again for another shot. I looked around for a minute and there it was, standing broadside, about 100 feet away beneath some pines. I slowly lifted my gun and took a shot.

BANG!

It was either down on the ground or had run off – I couldn't tell. I made my way quickly through the trees to the spot where it had been standing.

Nothing. I had missed.

I stood there for awhile thinking about my chances to get this buck. I still had time before I needed to return to my car. I looked at my watch.

3:00 p.m.

I could track it for another hour and still have time to drag it out before 6:00 p.m., a half hour after sunset and the official time for hunting to end. I decided this should work out just fine. I didn't want to take a chance coming back tomorrow and having some other hunter bag my prize buck.

I took out my compass to get a bearing for the direction the buck had taken. It showed 300 degrees NW.

Okay, that CAN NOT be possible, I thought, perplexed.

My internal compass was telling me this reading should have been SW, not NW. I put the compass in my pocket and decided I was on my own with the directions. I was confident I could remember the turns I had taken previously. If I didn't get the buck, I would make better time going back since I wouldn't be stopping, and I had a flashlight if it got too close to nightfall.

I followed the tracks of the buck in the soft soil for awhile. I stopped and looked at my watch.

3:25 p.m.

Push forward a little bit longer, I told myself silently.

3:40 p.m.

Okay, twenty more minutes, I thought. *I can do this.*

I walked some more, and even though it was getting late, I could still get the buck out of the woods in time. I would just tie its legs together and drag it like a stretcher behind me. I could always dress it out later. I looked at my watch.

4:02 p.m.

It wasn't going to happen today. I needed to get myself out of the woods and try again tomorrow. I turned and began walking back along the trail toward the second (*or third?*) trail I had taken from the main trail. As I was walked, I realized darkness was coming on much quicker in the woods than I had anticipated. There were large shadows starting to form all around me.

I kept walking. It was becoming more difficult to see my tracks in front of me. I took out my flashlight and flipped the switch.

Nothing.

I kept flipping the switch forward.

Nothing.

I was sure I had new batteries in it. I dug around in my pack for some extras, but I was out of luck.

Okay, I just need to get to the main trail where it is more open and much easier to see, I thought hopefully.

I remembered that there was supposed to be a full moon out tonight. Maybe that would help illuminate the trail so I could see my way out.

I walked and walked. Nothing I saw looked familiar or made any sense to me. I knew my car was to the east, but I couldn't go that way because the swamp was too dense to safely maneuver, especially at night. I had to find my way to

higher ground where I had been before I started tracking the deer. Then I could follow the main trail out of the woods.

So I turned in the direction of what appeared to be higher ground and started walking. After about 30 minutes, I stopped.

Philip, you are definitely lost, I told myself. What are you going to do about it?

I needed to put the little bit of sunlight I had left to good use. I began gathering firewood which I knew was the first activity to complete for survival. Then I built a small lean-to for shelter from the cold and weather should it rain or snow. There were plenty of fir and spruce bows here to weave a roof for my lean-to. I was satisfied with my efforts.

I decided to look at my compass again by the firelight to see if I could determine the location of east where my car was located. The needle of the compass floated a little. I tried to hold my hand very still. However, instead of slowing down, it began to spin around continuously.

Impossible, I thought. How can that be?

My compass needle should be stopping at magnetic north. It had always worked in the past. Maybe there was something in the ground throwing it off.

Or maybe it was possessed by some kind of demon, I thought.

I told myself I couldn't start thinking about demons at a time like this. All those scary stories I had heard while camping wouldn't help me feel comfortable here by myself right now. I needed to focus on the problem and think about what to do next.

So I decided to shoot three rounds from my gun to alert anyone nearby I was lost. Now would be the best time before any hunters in the area were packed up and on their way home.

I pointed the rifle in the air, shooting it three times, and spacing the shots a few seconds apart. Then I counted the shells I had left.

Seven.

I would have to wait an hour or two and try it again if no one came looking for me. It would put me down to just four shells, an amount I would have to try and protect. I hated the thought of being in the dark woods with less.

The fire was burning bright and I made sure I had a good pile of wood next to me to throw on as I needed. I hoped the fire would attract someone who had heard my distress signal a few moments ago.

I looked at my watch.

6:16 p.m.

Hunters would be out of the woods right now. My chances of getting out on my own were slim to none. I would have to wait for later when my parents realized I was missing. They would come looking for me with a search party. I was glad I let them know where I would be hunting. They would find my car near the trail and begin searching with flashlights.

Keep calm and wait it out, I coaxed myself.

I ate a sandwich I had left over in my pack and an apple. I saved the last sandwich, a crème roll, and an apple for later in case this took awhile. I poked the fire and looked around. I had camped in the woods at night many times before, but I was always with other kids and adults – never alone.

I thought about something my Scoutmaster, Richard, used to tell me and the other Scouts. He would say, “Boys, there is nothing in the Maine woods that will ever harm you.” Later on he talked about an exception to the rule. He said that if you point a flashlight at a moose it may charge. Moose hate alight in their eyes. I wasn’t worried about a moose charging because my flashlight wasn’t working anyway.

Then Richard remembered another exception to the rule. He said, “If you come across a hurt bear, or if you mess around with her cubs, she might attack you.”

Okay, let’s hope there were no injured bears around me tonight, I thought.

I continued to poke the fire for awhile, throwing on more wood as it burned down. I enjoyed the sound of the crackling fire and the comforting warmth it gave on a cool fall night, but I wished I could hear the sounds of the forest better over the campfire noise. I kept looking around in the darkness. Would I know if someone *or something* was walking up behind me? Is there something lurking out there in the woods right now? My mind kept wandering back to the tales I had heard about ghosts, vampires, devils, and murderers. I had to ignore these stories or else I would scare myself to death.

As time slipped by, I thought about taking my next three distress signal shots. I looked at my watch.

7:48 p.m.

My parents would be at my car by now. They would have realized by 6:45 p.m. or so that I should have been back home by then. It would have taken them about 15 minutes to make some phone calls to get some friends to help in the search, then another 15 minutes or so for everyone to gather their flashlights and gear before leaving in their cars. It would take them another 30 minutes to drive to my parking place at the edge of the woods.

I hoisted the rifle up to my shoulder and pointed it upward.

Bang! (silence for five seconds)

Bang! (silence again for five seconds)

Only four bullets left, I thought.

Bang!

Just as I finished my third shot I felt a slight breeze as something fluttered past me.

Bats! I thought.

They were flying all around me. I must have startled them during the shooting. I could hear them all around my head, fluttering and flapping their wings. I could faintly see their small black outlines darting around above the fire. I ducked my head to avoid being hit. I was sure they were big bats with big teeth; big teeth I did not want stuck in my little neck. They

must have been nesting right above me in the trees. It made me think about the stories of bats and vampires I had heard before.

Maybe these were vampire bats? I thought.

This thought was certainly unsettling.

How did I get myself into this situation? I wondered.

My mind kept thinking the worse. I remembered the story I had heard during my Scouting trips about a vampire. I wished I had a crucifix or some garlic with me right now....

The girl woke up in the middle of the night and looked out her bedroom window. She saw her dead brother, Mike, smiling at her. They had buried him three days ago after being killed by a vampire. Now he was at her window and smiling at her. She did not feel afraid. His presence seemed hypnotic. He held up his hand to the window and she could hear him gently whisper, "Let me in, Kate. Let me in."

She sat up in bed, turned her body sideways, and put her legs on the floor. She continued to look at him, not believing it was really Mike, but unable to stop herself from answering his commands. She stood up and walked to the window. She waited there for a moment, knowing this was not really Mike, but some creature that looked like Mike. It was a Mike-Creature. The real Mike was dead. His soul had left his body leaving the corpse to rot in the grave. This creature in front of her was a figment of her imagination, and she was having a nightmare.

He kept beckoning her, "Kate, open the window. Let me come in."

She reached her hand for the window and stopped only inches from the clasp. Something told her this Mike-Creature would not – could not – hurt if she did not invite him in.

“Please, Kate,” the Mike-Creature begged. “Let me come in. It’s cold out here.”

He looks so sad, she thought.

His eyes were piercing and hypnotic. He stretched out his hand to her and touched the pane of glass.

“Please, Kate, I want to be with you.”

The force was too overwhelming. She unlatched the window and pushed it open. The Mike-Creature glided through on a wisp of air and stood beside her in the bedroom.

“Thank you Kate. I missed you. Please join me in my new home. I am sure you will enjoy it.”

The vampire leaned over and opened its foul mouth aiming at her neckline. Just as it was about to sink its fanged teeth into her flesh, her nightgown parted, exposing a crucifix on a necklace next to her breasts. Immediately the vampire reeled back in pain, holding its clawed hands in front of its face for protection. Kate could smell the burning flesh as the crucifix radiated a holy light onto the face of the vampire. Staggering backwards, the bloodsucking creature turned around and jumped out the window, turning into a large bat, and flying off into the night sky.

Kate shook her head and came out of the trance the vampire had put her in. She reached up and felt the crucifix hanging around her neck. She would make sure to wear it every day, especially when she went out to hunt down the Master Vampire who had killed her brother.

After thinking about the vampire story, I grabbed a branch and started whittling a sharp point at the end of it for a stake to drive into its heart and kill it. I didn’t want to take any chances in case one of those bats turned into a vampire.

As I was carving, I occasionally looked in the darkness. The fire was cutting the blackness with daggers of flickering flames and light. I looked down at my watch.

10:03 p.m.

I looked back up and saw two red eyes in the woods.

Oh my god, a werewolf – a shape-shifter waiting to devour me, I thought.

Then the eyes disappeared.

I scanned the trees in front of me, and then quickly turned to look to my rear. The two red eyes were there again, but in a different location. It had to be a werewolf.

I looked up, hoping not to see the full moon that I knew was scheduled for tonight. I couldn't see it with all the trees in the way, but I knew it was there.

Suddenly, the red eyes disappeared. As I looked for them again, I remembered the story I heard around the campfire just a month ago about the she-wolf.....

Many years ago there was a hunter that came upon a wolf who attacked him. He struggled with it and was able to get away when he severed the wolf's paw. He escaped with it in his hand. When he got home, he put the paw in a bag.

The next day he took the wolf paw to show his neighbor. He took it out of the bag only to discover that it was not a wolf's paw any longer, but the hand of a young woman with a gold ring. The neighbor recognized the ring as his wife's and called her into the room. When she came in, her wrist was bandaged and her hand was missing. She admitted being a werewolf and was then burned at the stake.

The story gave me the chills.

Anybody could be a werewolf, I thought.

I looked at the three bullets in my hand.

If those blood-red eyes belonged to a werewolf, or a she-wolf, would my bullets kill it? I wondered.

I didn't think so. I had heard only silver bullets could kill a werewolf.

As I was thinking about ways to kill a werewolf without silver bullets, I heard the sharp snap of a branch.

"Is someone out there?" I asked out loud.

Or something, I thought.

Maybe the sound of my voice would scare it away. It would if it was a "normal" animal as opposed to an "abnormal" animal like as a supernatural beast, but what if it wasn't a beast at all, but a deranged lunatic like the "Hook Man"...

There was a young couple out on a date at Lover's Lane one night. The spot was dark and spooky. They were kissing when the music on the radio suddenly stopped. The announcer said that a deranged murderer had just escaped from the insane asylum, and if anyone notices a strange man lurking around with a hook instead of a hand, they should call the police immediately. The girl became frightened and asked to leave, but the boyfriend felt brave, locked the doors, and they continued to kiss.

She couldn't stop thinking about the deranged murderer with the hook, and became frantic. She pushed him away and demanded they leave. After arguing about it for a little while, the mad boy immediately put the car in gear and floored it, spinning the wheels, and screeching out of the parking spot.

When they pulled into her driveway, the girl opened her door and slammed it shut. She stared at the door and screamed. The boyfriend asked her what was wrong and ran around to her side of the car.

There in front of him, hanging from the car door handle, was a sharp bloody hook.

I knew the Hook Man was a mortal being and could be killed, but what if the creature-thing in the woods was not mortal, like a zombie from the George Romero movies? As this played out in my mind, I heard a low moaning sound coming from the woods. Scenes from the 1968 “Night of the Living Dead” flashed through my mind.....

The brother and sister are at the cemetery placing a wreath on their father’s grave. The girl is afraid of cemeteries. The brother taunts her by saying, ‘They’re coming to get you, Barbra!’ Not too far away a tall pale-faced man lumbers toward them and suddenly attacks Barbra. The brother tries to help her, but he falls down and smashes his head against a gravestone. Barbra drives away in the car and ends up hiding out in an old farmhouse with some other people. The radio announcer says there is an epidemic of mass murder sweeping across the country and the undead perpetrators are eating their victims. Only a gunshot or a heavy blow to the head will stop these ghouls. A little while later, the undead people break into the farm house and Barbra’s brother is one of them. Unable to fight back anymore, Barbra is then carried off by the zombies to be eaten.

The movie gave me the chills when I saw it, but none more than I felt right now.

So zombies could be killed with a bullet to the head, or with a blunt object, I thought.

Well, I only had four bullets left so I had better find a blunt object somewhere around here. I picked up a big sturdy stick I

was going to throw into the fire and kept it next to me for a weapon.

I thought about what else I could use as a weapon that might work on whatever was out there. I unsheathed my knife and started to whittle a long sharp spear to impale anything that might cause me harm.

Okay, a spear might work on a werewolf or the Hook Man, but it would definitely not work on a ghost, I thought.

As the fire flickered and danced, I could see shadows and images moving around in the trees. I imagined the woods contained the unsettled souls of ghosts that were wandering around looking for revenge. I thought about a ghost story I had heard from one of my fellow Scouts not too long ago.....

In 1888, a young 13 year-old-girl named Sarah was picking flowers near a cliff in Lincoln, Maine. She enjoyed getting away from her home because she lived with her mother who was ill of mind and hated the girl. The girl wandered close to the side of the cliff to watch the river far below and enjoy the beautiful scenery. Sometimes she would throw flowers over the edge and watch them fall into the river. Apparently, she had leaned over too far one day and fell off the cliff to her death.

Thirteen years later, on the anniversary of her death, some people were camping nearby and saw a ghostly figure of a young girl in white walking along the cliff. She moved toward the edge and stopped. Suddenly her body fell forward down the cliff, her scream piercing the silence.

Every 13 years on the anniversary of her death the same thing would happen; someone would see her ghostly form on the top of the cliff falling off and screaming. The local people began to call the spot "Maiden's Cliff."

One day in 1940 on the anniversary of her death, three young teenagers went to the top of Maiden's cliff to get a close look at the ghost. They knew it had been exactly 13 years since she was last sighted and it was expected she would return again tonight. The teenagers waited, and sure enough, she passed right before them, walking on air, and moving to the edge of the cliff. The girl stopped at the precipice, turned to face the boys a few feet away, and screamed, "Mother, don't!" Then here ghostly apparition hurled itself over the side of the cliff as she screamed a bloodcurdling scream the boys would never forget until the day they died.

The fire crackled and sizzled making an eerie wailing noise as if someone was being burned to death. I thought about the story I had heard about the witch who was burned at the stake....

Many years ago in the 1600's, in the town of Bucksport, Maine, the founder of the town, Colonel Jonathan Buck, a Revolutionary War hero, believed that a woman in the town was a witch, so he had her burned alive at the stake. Just before she died, she cursed Buck, saying she would leave her mark on his gravestone for all eternity, letting everyone know he had killed an innocent person. As she died, her leg fell off and rolled out of the fire.

Years later when Buck died his relatives erected a stone monument in his honor. Soon afterwards, the monument developed a stain in the shape of a boot. The stone was removed twice and replaced by two different stones, only to have the stain reappear again each time. It has been washed and scraped

many times over the years, but nothing has ever worked to get rid of the boot-shaped stain.

Here I was, alone and lost in the woods, and every scary story I had ever heard was being played out like a movie in my mind. I had resigned myself to the fact I was going to spend the night here in this very dark forest of unimaginable monsters. I was only making it worse by remembering these horrific tales. Hearing those stories with friends around was considered risky, but not dangerous, because there was always safety in numbers. Unless of course, you were with friends who had been secretly invaded by alien parasites who took over their bodies and controlled their minds, like the story of the Body Snatchers.....

In the middle of some wheat field out west a spaceship full of aliens landed. The aliens could control slimy snake-like creatures that would creep around in the night trying to find human hosts to invade. They crawled on people when they were sleeping and entered their mouths. Then they controlled their brains. After the victims were invaded, they would wake up and look normal, but they were actually aliens with no emotion. They attacked other people using slimy creatures to invade their bodies and controlled them in the same manner. Eventually all the people in the world were taken over by these body snatchers.

I would have to remember to cover my mouth when I went to sleep tonight so that nothing could slither in and take over my body.

I looked down at my watch.

11:50 p.m.

Ten minutes to midnight – the bewitching hour, I thought.

I tried not to panic. Shivers ran up and down my spine in waves. It was getting dreadfully close to that awful hour of legend, the time when demons, devils, and creatures of the night were the most powerful, and if it was a full moon tonight, the Witching Hour would be the strongest evil ever imagined. The Devil would be searching for more followers to carry out his dastardly deeds.

Of course, knowing the meaning behind the approaching hour, I couldn't help but to think of a devil story I had heard from a fellow Scout...

There was once a young lady who had been told by her mother not to go to a town dance because it was the week of Lent and she should not participate in such unreligious activities, but she couldn't resist the temptation and went anyway without her mother's knowledge.

The young lady danced with several men until a handsomely dressed stranger asked her to dance. He mesmerized her with his black hair and dark coal black eyes that glistened in the light. The band was playing a waltz and the man was spinning her around and around, dancing faster and faster. A member of the band saw the couple and looked down at the man's feet. He noticed the stranger had the cloven hooves of Satan.

The band member immediately stopped the waltz and got the band to start playing a religious song. In the middle of the song, the clock struck midnight and the stranger pulled the woman with him across the room and they both crashed through the window. The people in the hall went outside and saw the woman on the ground with broken glass around her, but the stranger was gone.

That story scared the crap out of me, but of course, another Scout came along a few minutes later and topped that Devil story with this one.....

There were two men playing cards by kerosene light in an old cabin in the middle of the night. The cabin was far in the woods so they were surprised when they heard a knock on the door. When they opened it, there was a tall dark stranger who asked to come in and visit with the men. They allowed him in and the stranger began to play cards with them.

Soon he was winning every hand and collecting almost all of the silver coins on the table. One of the men accidentally dropped a card on the floor and bent down under the table to pick it up. While there he noticed the stranger had cloven hooves for feet!

The man began to panic and accidentally knocked the table over as he was getting up causing the kerosene lantern to break and start the cabin on fire. The two men ran out of the cabin, but the stranger stayed inside. The men huddled down by a tree until the cabin was burned to the ground.

They approached the smoldering ruins and looked around, but they could not find the remains of the stranger. All they found was a strange sight indeed: all of the silver money had melted together in a shape of an upside down cross – the sign of the Devil.

After thinking about these stories, I kept searching the woods for a sign of flashlights from my rescuers. There were no bobbing lights anywhere to be seen. I strained to hear noises from their footsteps in the leaves and twigs. I closed my eyes with the gun gripped tightly in my hands, listening as intently as possible.

I waited and listened.

Waited.....and.....listened; my eyes tightly shut.

Waited.....and.....listened; my eyes now relaxing.

Waited and listened.

When I opened my eyes a man was standing in front of me. He was dressed all in black except for his white gloves. He had a tall black hat on his head. He had a long thin mustache that curled upwards ever so slightly on each end toward his bloodshot eyes. He leaned forward on his walking stick as he looked at me. Next to him were two very large black dogs – *or wolves?* I wondered, – baring their teeth at me. They were drooling thick slimy globs of mucus between their teeth and staring at me through their own bloodshot eyes.

“Whhh...huh...Who...Who are you?” I stammered.

“I am Beelzebub, Lucifer, or Satan,” he announced. “Forward I am EVIL with a capital ‘D.’ Backwards I have LIVED since the dawn of time. My home is Hades, and Earth is my recruiting ground. I am here to make you a deal. In return for your soul, I will give you safe passage through these woods. Otherwise, you will face a night of many beasts.”

I wasn’t about to make a pact with the Prince of Darkness and his two hounds from hell. I had other plans for my soul.

I took two steps backwards, turned and ran as fast as I could. He called for his demon hounds to chase me. I could hear them barking and howling as they closed in. Soon they would be on my heels, dragging me down, and back to him, and certain death.

As I was running, I tripped on something and fell flat on my face. I lay there, temporarily stunned, knowing the end was near. I just hoped it would be quick and painless.

In no time at all, I could feel one of the hounds breathing hot fire and brimstone on my neck. I could feel its furry rotten snout and fanged mouth pressed against my neck and...

...that’s when I woke up, screaming. I had been asleep the whole time, but something really was breathing down my neck

– a search dog. My dad and several other men were standing over me with flashlights and asking if I was alright.

How could I ever be all right after hearing so many CREEPY CAMPFIRE TALES my whole life?

AFTERWARD

The final campfire story I want to share with you is very much true. It is a story about how the Boys Scouts of America saved a man's life. It happened to a Scoutmaster who lived in Washburn, a little town near my own. His name was Herm Nevers.

I believe Herm was in his early 60s when he first told me his story in the 1970s. I heard that he died sometime in the early 1980s. Herm attended every Scout event held in my area. There wasn't a Scout around in those days who didn't know him. He was quite recognizable – the epitome of Scouting – wearing his wide brim hat, his old Scout uniform from the '30s, his laced up hiking boots and his full vest of old Scout patches (the envy of every leader in the District). He walked with a hiking stick and leaned on it from time to time as he spoke. He had the hardened look of someone who had been through a lot in his life.

He enjoyed walking from campsite to campsite during Camporees to visit each and every Scout in the North Star District. We were always excited to see him because he had so many cool stories to tell about the outdoors and wilderness survival. Herm wasn't a man to brag about anything, but he did have one very important story to tell – a very *personal* story, and it was the reason that he was still alive to tell about it.

His life in Scouts began like the rest of us. He started out as a Cub Scout, and then went on into Webelos and Boy Scouts. Herm had spent much of his childhood learning the Scouting values and ideals. He pledged his allegiance to the American flag and swore to follow the Scout Oath and Law:

*On my honor I will do my best
To do my duty, to God and my country
And to obey the Scout Law;
To help other people at all times;
To keep myself physically strong,
mentally awake, and morally straight.*

A Scout is...trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.

Herm joined the military following his years as a teenager in the Boy Scouts. He served his country like most other young men during World War II. While fighting the Germans he was captured and sent to a prison camp. Many prisoners were killed while he was there. He knew his days were surely numbered.

During his imprisonment, he began talking with one of the prison guards about his experiences as a Boy Scout. Fate would have it that he and the German guard had something in common: the guard had also been a Boy Scout. Both men were from different countries, but both had spoken the same Oath and Law.

Over the days and weeks to come, they both shared similar experiences of how the Scouting organization had given them enjoyment and satisfaction in their lives. There was goodness with Scouting and it transcended all cultures, religions and countries. It promoted goodness even in the most adverse times in our history.

So it came to pass that one day the prison guard told Herm because he was a Scout he would do him a favor. He would give him a two hour head start to escape from the prison camp before he would have to report him missing. Herm took the opportunity and escaped.

Herm vowed he would devote the rest of his life to promoting Scouting in his community and his world, and he did just that until the day he died.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Phil Dickinson grew up in a small town in northern Maine in the 60's and 70's. In 1985 he moved to Flint, Michigan where he worked at General Motor's Institute. In 1987 he moved northward to Indian River and began working as a Social Worker for the State of Michigan.

Phil's Scouting adventures began at an early age in Cub Scouts and continued through the Webelos and Boy Scout ranks. During the time he was in Boy Scouts he attended camp at Katahdin Scout Reservation (KSR) in Eddington, Maine, when he was 14. He was inducted in the Pamola Lodge 216 of the Katahdin Area Council Order of the Arrow when he was 16. He was later promoted into the Leadership Corp for the last two years of his Scouting career before turning 18 in July 1980.

Phil is currently the Scoutmaster of his local Troop. He is married to wife, Stormy, and has five children, Amanda, Jessica, Kayla, Duncan and Ian.